

The Queen's Hand

Janna Bianchini

*Power and Authority
in the Reign of
Berenguela of
Castile*



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The Queen's Hand

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Power and Authority in the Reign
of Berenguela of Castile

Janna Bianchini

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For Natka: each day with you is a blessing.

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A Note on Names

Medieval historians always have to wrestle with the problem of rendering medieval names into modern prose. My method has been to name people and places according to the language presently spoken in their region: French in modern France, Spanish in modern Spain, and so on. Of course, even this has its challenges. Popes and emperors appear in their standard Anglicized forms. The names of places across present-day Spain appear in Castilian; so do the names of Castilian and Leonese people. The names of people from Aragón-Cataluña are given in Catalan, partly to reflect the language many of them spoke, and partly to help readers distinguish among the seemingly infinite number of royal Alfonsos who populate twelfth- and thirteenth-century Iberia. In Castilian the name is Alfonso; in Catalan, Alfons; and in Portuguese, Afonso.

Standardizing medieval names according to modern norms inevitably costs some authenticity, however. For example, the men I identify here as Rodrigo or Rodríguez often spoke of themselves as Ruy or Ruiz—their names are written that way in some medieval charters. More often, though, scribes recorded them as Rodericus or Roderici, and I use the more Latinate form of the name for that reason. Similarly, I have used the Anglicized version of a few European place names, most notably Castile and Navarre, for the sake of readability in English.

The names of royal women reflect the language of the kingdom into which they married, rather than the one in which they were born. A queen usually spent most of her life in her husband's homeland, and became part of its history. So we have Blanche of Castile, rather than Blanca, and Leonor of England, rather than Eleanor.

Finally, readers should note that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Castilian and Leonese noble families had not yet acquired stable patronyms. The great families were beginning to be identified with specific locations—Haro, Lara, Castro, and so on—and I use these names far more extensively

than the magnates themselves did. Noble children identified themselves primarily by their father's name, which means patronyms changed from generation to generation. Thus Diego López was the son of a man named Lope—adding *-ez* to a name signified “child of.” This can become confusing, because Castilian and Leonese families tended to recycle names. Diego López might name his oldest son after his father, Lope, so that the son would be known as Lope Díaz. Lope Díaz might name *his* oldest son after *his* father, creating another Diego López—and so on.

In all these cases, I have done my best to marry readability and authenticity. If the marriage sometimes flounders, the responsibility is mine.

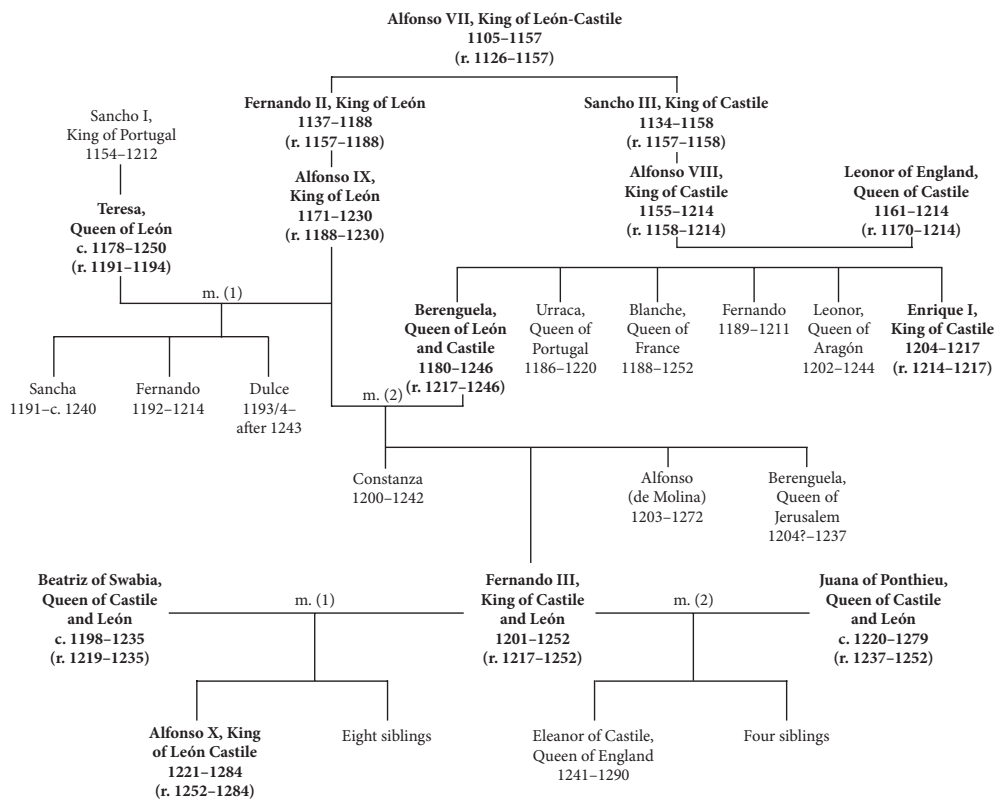


Figure 1. The royal houses of León and Castile.

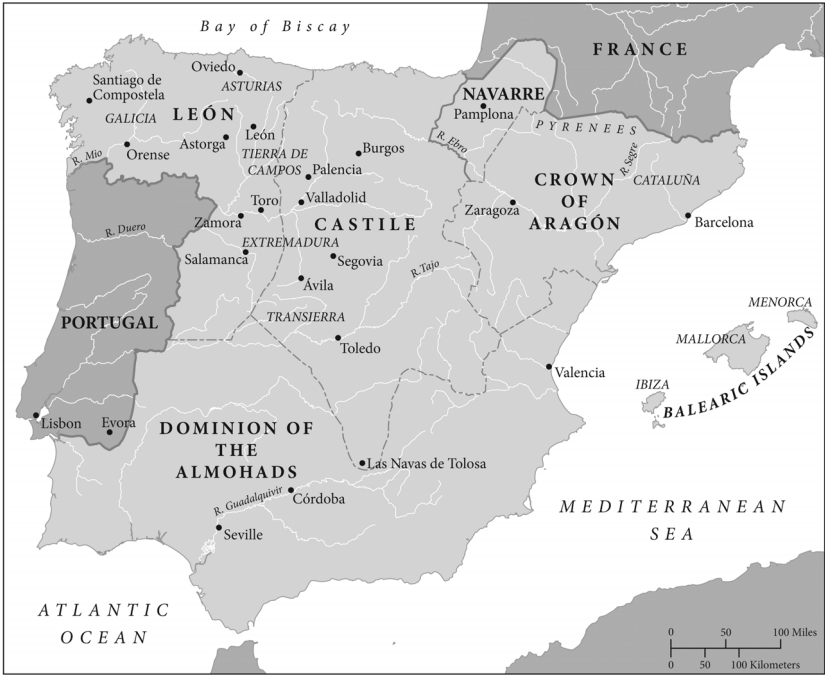


Figure 2. Iberia in the early thirteenth century.

Introduction

Berenguela of Castile is not a household name. Even in her native Spain, and even among historians, mention of her is often greeted with a puzzled smile. Compared to her grandmother Eleanor of Aquitaine or her sister Blanche of Castile, she is at best an obscure figure in the already shadowy ranks of medieval queens.

During her lifetime, though, Berenguela was one of the most powerful women in Europe. Contemporary sources, both narrative and documentary, praise her accomplishments and authority in terms rarely accorded to women. They leave no doubt that Berenguela was responsible for major events in thirteenth-century Spanish history, from the conquest of Muslim Córdoba to the unification of the kingdoms of Castile and León.

Her fall from such prominence to such obscurity is not altogether mystifying. Like most medieval women, she was a casualty of gender bias in the work of medieval, early modern, and modern historians. To some extent, she was also affected by what was, until quite recently, a disdain for Iberian history on the part of European and North American scholars—although those attitudes cannot explain her near-total absence from Spanish historiography as well. In the Spanish context, the most important obstacle to a full recognition of her significance was that she had a son—and not just any son. She was the mother of Fernando III, San Fernando, the crusading saint-king whose spectacular successes in the Reconquista could have made him a legend all by themselves. Combined with his canonization as a Catholic saint, they instead made him a figure of such cultural stature that it can be difficult to tease the historical fact of his life away from its mythos. That mythos does not easily accommodate anyone else's contributions to its hero's legacy—certainly not his mother's.

It is not my purpose to degrade Fernando III's achievements. I want only to consider the early thirteenth century from a different angle, one that centers on Berenguela rather than her son. It is not possible to understand

the history of Castile and León as long as the history of women is excised from it. But to say that Berenguela's pivotal role during her son's reign subtracts anything from Fernando III's own significance creates a false dichotomy. History is not a zero-sum game. In Berenguela's case and that of many other women, however, it has been treated as one; Fernando III's success has been allowed to eclipse his mother's. And her career deserves to be studied in its own right.

Until very recently, though, it hasn't been. In the last few years, scholars such as Miriam Shadis, Ana Rodríguez López, Georges Martin, David Raizman, and James D'Emilio have begun to reestablish Berenguela's centrality to thirteenth-century Spanish history.¹ Yet misconceptions about her and her reign persist, even in the work of deeply informed and thoughtful scholars. In the last few years, prominent Iberian historians have continued to repeat the canard that Berenguela abdicated the throne to her son in 1217—or, in one case, even that she died that year.² When the date of Fernando III's accession to Castile can be mistaken for the date of Berenguela's death, it is a sign of something seriously amiss in the historiographical record.

These omissions are all the more startling when one considers that, in comparison with what is available for other medieval queens, the documentation for Berenguela's career is an embarrassment of riches. Her actions and the major events of her life are well represented by contemporary chronicles, the most significant of which were composed by men who knew her personally. A number of surviving official documents record her own acts or decrees; we also have letters that she exchanged with the pope and other European potentates. Hundreds of royal diplomas attest to her participation in the acts of her father, husband, or son. And literally thousands of other medieval documents refer to her, even if only in passing. This wealth of archival sources, both published and unpublished, makes it possible to reconstruct large parts of Berenguela's career.

That career offers a useful case study for medieval queenship. During her lifetime, Berenguela exercised power in every way available to a royal woman of her era. As a child, she was formally recognized as heir to her father's kingdom, Castile. She later became a queen-consort by marrying the king of neighboring León. On her father's death, she was appointed regent for her younger brother; when he died unexpectedly, she inherited the throne of Castile in her own right, thus becoming a queen-regnant. At the same time, she elevated her son Fernando III to the throne, which placed her in the potentially powerful position of queen-mother. By examining the ways

in which Berenguela acquired, maintained, and used power in each of these capacities, we can gain insight into how other queens managed the same roles.

Yet Berenguela's achievements also set her apart from her contemporaries both within and outside Iberia. Like her grandmother and sister, she belongs to the upper echelons of queenly power, the elite of the elite. Her exceptionalism threatens to relegate her to the dustbin of "women worthies," those exemplars whose enormous distance from the experience of most women makes them seem, at best, irrelevant to history. At worst, they can be seen as falsifications of women's lived experience—their success seems to elide the misogyny or oppression suffered by their contemporaries. And how can we justify the disproportionate attention given to elite women, whose well-documented lives are the product of their status, when the vast majority of women in the past were not elite and are therefore in danger of being lost to history?³

My own view is that, first, all women's history is worth recovering. Even the study of super-elites like Berenguela and her peers challenges the historical narrative by breaking its habitual focus on the acts and words of men. For a very long time, modern historians followed their medieval forebears by acknowledging women only when they had no other choice.⁴ Historians of medieval queenship have lately forced a reevaluation even of the most conventionally patriarchal fields of historiography—the master narrative of kings, wars, and institutions—by proving that, for example, "monarchy" (despite its name) was a collaborative and potentially multigendered phenomenon, not an institution that depended on the single, male, person of the king.⁵ In doing so, they have called into question the idea that powerful queens were exceptions to a strictly masculine norm. The norm was too narrowly conceived to begin with; studying these queens as part of the institution of monarchy (rather than as deviations from it) is essential to a more accurate redefinition.⁶

Second, the study of women who were successful even within a patriarchal society helps us understand how that patriarchy functioned in practice. Medieval ideas about women were complex and varied; there was no more *a* medieval view of women than there was *a* medieval view of theology. And this diversity of opinion was particularly evident in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the period in which Berenguela came to power.⁷ Her achievements were made possible by a careful and continual negotiation of the public appearance of her authority. In order to exercise power, she had

to be seen as no threat to the masculine order of her world, and that placed both rhetorical and practical restraints on her actions. So this is a study of how a medieval woman used patriarchal norms to her advantage, *and* about how she was constrained by them. It is also a study of how she reinforced those norms. Women were agents of patriarchy as well as its victims, and Berenguela's career is an example of how a woman might subvert patriarchal expectations while also acceding to them.⁸

That fact leads to the central concerns of my research. First, how did Berenguela obtain her power, and how did she keep it? It is easy enough to say that she was one of the most powerful women of her era, but what made it possible for her to achieve that distinction? Second, what implications does her career have for our understanding of queenship not only in western Iberia, but in medieval Europe as a whole?

Miriam Shadis's recent book on Berenguela, which explores her career in the context of those of her mother and sisters, offers some answers to these questions. However, Shadis takes a different approach than I have, focusing on Berenguela's motherhood as the foundation of her legitimacy and authority throughout her life.⁹ Shadis's inquiry provides valuable insight into the ways that maternity and family interest could legitimate women's power, and it is especially innovative in evaluating Berenguela alongside the other women of her extraordinary family. But Berenguela's status as a royal mother, with all the complexities and significance inherent in that position, was only one dimension of her career—and, in my view, it was not the central one.¹⁰ I argue that Berenguela's authority was based not on her motherhood, but on her independent lordship in certain key properties along the border between Castile and León;¹¹ and on her use of those properties to establish patronage relationships with nobles and prelates who later supported her bids for power. This, combined with her hereditary rights in Castile, made it possible for her not only to gain the title of queen but to wield genuine authority, even though she ruled in conjunction with her adult son. Later, the same strategies helped her gain the throne of León—nominally for her son, although in fact the two of them ruled jointly in León just as they did in Castile.

Looking at Berenguela's career in this light, we can better understand not only the practice of queenship, but also the practice of power. Medieval monarchy was a variable institution, shaped by external forces as well as by the wills or personalities of monarchs themselves. In particular, pressure from other powers within the realm—such as secular or ecclesiastical lords—had a key role in determining how royal authority was conceived or expressed.

Under the right circumstances, these external pressures could create spaces where royal women wielded extensive influence, and even authority.

Royal Women and Royal Power

In discussing power and authority in this book, I follow Theresa Earenfight's definitions of the terms, drawn ultimately from Foucault's. Power is "a force that exists in its exercise." Authority, on the other hand, is a subset of power: "any capacity to secure obedience or conformity that is derived from a title to do so and that follows a hierarchical chain of command."¹² Lordship is authority; the influence that queens were supposed to have over their husbands by virtue of their marital tie is power. I make the same distinction in the terms *formal* and *informal*; the exercise of formal power is authority, while the exercise of any other kind of power (such as persuasion) is informal. Needless to say, these categories blur at the edges. But so do most others, and when speaking of queenship it is essential to distinguish between the (often limited) authority that royal women held and their (often extensive) power.

While the twelfth- and thirteenth-century royal women of Iberia have been generally less studied than their English and French peers, recent research indicates that these queens "exercised considerable legitimate authority more often, more publicly, and more directly than queens elsewhere in Europe." This was true of queens-consort as well as of the rare queens-regnant,¹³ and it was also apparently true throughout most of the Middle Ages and across the Iberian peninsula.¹⁴ What made these queens' roles different from others'?

The social and cultural situation of the Iberian kingdoms in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries was unusual in Europe. The southern half of the Iberian peninsula was ruled by the Almohad empire, based in North Africa, whose sultans had conquered the remnants of the great Iberian caliphate of al-Andalus in the mid-twelfth century. The northern half of the peninsula was divided into five Christian kingdoms: Portugal, León, Castile, Navarre, and Aragón-Cataluña. Until the middle of the twelfth century, León and Castile had been a single kingdom, but after the death of Alfonso VII in 1157, that kingdom was split in two.

The division gave rise to bitter feuding between the kings of León and Castile. Apart from its length and ardor, though, their dispute was fairly typical of relations among the Iberian kingdoms during this period. The

crusading fervor that had swept Europe at the close of the eleventh century had not passed over Iberia, although Iberian Christians were far more concerned with fighting the Muslims of al-Andalus than with fighting those of the Holy Land. By the mid-twelfth century, papal sanction had given their territorial struggles against the Almohads the status of a crusade;¹⁵ yet the Iberian monarchs fought at least as often and as fiercely against each other as against their southern neighbors. The role of León and Castile in the campaigns now collectively known as the Reconquista was large and often dramatic during Berenguela's lifetime, and the actions of both crowns were inevitably shaped by royal desire and obligation to attack and defend against the Almohads. Yet Berenguela's career reflects the crowns' other priorities—the management of affairs within the kingdom, and the making of both alliances and war with Christian as well as Muslim neighbors. The Reconquista profoundly influenced her life but did not define it.

Ironically, though, the Reconquista may have helped make Berenguela's career possible.¹⁶ The customs of cognatic kinship and partible inheritance, which tended to promote women's social and economic consequence, prevailed considerably longer in Iberia than elsewhere in Western Europe. In cognatic kinship, relatives in both the male and female lines were considered kin: one's family included not only one's father, uncles, and paternal grandparents, but also one's mother, her siblings, her parents, and so on. This broad view of kinship was coupled with the custom of partible inheritance, in which parents distributed their patrimony among all their children—daughters as well as sons. Partible inheritance worked well as long as there was a steady supply of new land available. But where there was no new land, noble families of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries began to consolidate their patrimony, and pass it intact from generation to generation, by abandoning partible inheritance in favor of primogeniture. Now the eldest son received all or most of his parents' property; his younger brothers received little or nothing, and his sisters got only their dowries. Primogeniture's emphasis on the transfer of patrimony (and with it, identity) from father to son encouraged a simultaneous shift in the concept of family; the old model of cognatic kinship gave way to a new model, agnatic kinship, in which lineages defined themselves through patrilineal descent. The "family" was now understood primarily in masculine terms.¹⁷

The Christian kingdoms of Iberia, however, had opportunities for expansion throughout most of the Middle Ages. Their sporadic conflicts with al-Andalus—ranging from border raids to full-scale crusades—provided a

reliable source of war booty, tribute, and new land to monarchs and nobles alike. As a result, the Iberian nobility of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries had not confronted the land starvation that had forced noble families elsewhere to conserve their patrimony through primogeniture. They could continue to divvy up their properties among their heirs, confident that those heirs in turn would acquire more land and wealth in the southern campaigns. Iberian women were therefore still able to inherit, own, and transmit shares of the family patrimony well into the fourteenth century.¹⁸ Their personal power was correspondingly more extensive, since they had access not only to the informal influence and delegated authority that their English or French counterparts might claim, but also to formal and independent authority as proprietors and lords within their own domains.

What was true for the nobility also held true for the monarchy. At marriage, Castilian and Leonese queens and noblewomen of Berenguela's era received a dower, or *arras*—property from their husbands' patrimony that was assigned to them for life. Like partible inheritance, this custom survived the shift elsewhere in Europe toward the use of dowry, which was assigned to the bride by her father out of *his* own patrimony, and became the property of her husband upon marriage.¹⁹ Queens therefore held and ruled substantial portions of the royal demesne as their own, which greatly enhanced not only their personal wealth but also their opportunities for patronage—two significant markers of queenly power.²⁰

In addition to their authority in their own domains, Castilian and Leonese queens shared extensively in the authority of the crown. Recent studies of queenship across Iberia have demonstrated that peninsular monarchy was a collaborative endeavor, characterized by *corule* among members of the royal family.²¹ The definition of who might share in this plural monarchy was flexible and often expansive; it could include parents, spouses, siblings, children, and even illegitimate siblings or offspring. And it was never static; even within a single reign, individuals could shift in and out of *corulership*. The “reigning monarch” was considered the only constant, the central figure in a constellation of authority. But we should not automatically assume that the reigning monarch was the king, or even that being male gave a monarch absolute precedence over female members of the royal family. The single most important element in the authority of a reigning monarch was his or her hereditary right to the crown. Certainly there was a marked cultural preference for male versus female heirs, so that in practice inheriting monarchs were usually kings. Certainly, too, “hereditary right” was a mutable

concept, subject to debate and interpretation, and generally best defined in retrospect—that is, after a monarch had made good on his or her claim to inherit through force or negotiation. But the plural monarchy routinely made space for women to participate in royal authority.

As the wives, daughters, mothers, or sisters of reigning kings, Castilian and Leonese women issued royal diplomas along with the king and other relatives, demonstrating that they shared in the power of the crown.²² It should not be assumed that royal women, in Iberia or anywhere else, were *equal* partners with men in the exercise of regalian authority. But if queens were subordinate to kings, they were not therefore insignificant.²³ On the contrary, the Iberian queens of Berenguela's era regularly engaged in activities that scholars have identified as indicative of queenly authority elsewhere, such as the exercise of justice within the royal demesne.²⁴ And in León and Castile, it was possible for women not only to inherit the throne, but even to rule in their own right—not easy, but possible.²⁵ Queen Urraca had done exactly that in the early twelfth century, proving that women's rights to the thrones of western Iberia were more than theoretical.²⁶ Here, then, the potential scope of queenly power was almost unlimited; the challenge lay in turning potential into reality.

Lords, Ladies, Kings, and Queens

In Iberia, the customs of arras and corule gave royal women considerable access to authority. And royal authority was a collaborative endeavor, shared among the members of a variably defined royal family. The changing identity of this plural monarchy is most visible in royal diplomas, which a monarch (usually but not always the reigning monarch) issued jointly with other family members. A typical intitulation in such diplomas—the portion of the document where the monarch identified him- or herself—looked like this: “I, don Alfonso, by the grace of God king of Castile and Toledo, together with (*una cum*) my wife Queen Leonor and with (*et cum*) my son Fernando.”²⁷

Generally speaking, the group who appeared in the intitulation changed with major life events: marriage, death, or the birth of children. Daughters could be included along with sons; they might also appear in place of sons when the reigning monarch had no male heir. Royal siblings might be named too, under certain circumstances.²⁸ In identifying a more-or-less standard

cohort of relatives as joint actors, royal intitulations “asserted the family, a specific moment in the lineage, as the ruling unit.”²⁹ It should be noted, however, that individuals are occasionally absent from intitulations for brief periods without losing their status as members of the ruling group. Especially in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, these short absences appear to reflect a person’s physical absence from the itinerant court, rather than an exclusion from authority.

The composition of the ruling cohort was dictated to some extent by custom. For example, when sons (and sometimes daughters) co-issued diplomas, the act signaled that they were potential heirs to the realm. Co-issuing allowed royal *infantes* (sons) and *infantas* (daughters) to participate in the crown’s formal authority. By doing so, they shared in their parents’ divinely conferred king- or queenship. A child’s eventual succession, then, was simply a progression from sharing royal authority to possessing it fully; the status of heirs was thereby legitimated and the succession was, ideally, protected from dispute.

Nevertheless, there are times when people who might be expected to co-issue diplomas do not. For example, Berenguela did not reliably co-issue diplomas even when she was her father’s presumptive heir; nor did Alfonso IX of León’s first wife, Teresa of Portugal, co-issue most of his diplomas, even though co-issuing was standard practice for a queen-consort. The composition of Castile and León’s plural monarchies was determined partly by custom, partly by the inheriting monarch’s choice, and partly by external pressures. These external pressures might come from the Church; they might also come from the secular nobility. So one focus of this study will be the symbiotic relationship between monarchy and nobility, and the ways in which Berenguela used it to her advantage.

Nuria Silleras-Fernandez has shown how vital it was for monarchs (and particularly for queens) to build consensus and support among nobles.³⁰ A key factor in this process was the ability to dispense patronage, to secure and reward the bonds of personal loyalty on which lordship, even lord-kingship or lord-queenship, depended.³¹ The religious patronage of queens has long been studied as a valuable clue to their power; their secular patronage is only beginning to come into focus as a field of study. Silleras-Fernandez has done important new work in this area, but the queens she studied were members of noble families native to the kingdoms where they reigned. Their patronage was therefore directed first and foremost toward their natal families.³² But Berenguela’s natal family was the royal house of Castile. So, although she

could certainly be said to have worked for her family's advantage, those efforts cannot properly be considered part of a patron-client relationship. Instead, the objects of her secular patronage were a select group of nobles, especially those whose patrimonies neighbored her own properties.

The personal loyalties she created through patronage, both secular and religious, were ultimately what enabled Berenguela to claim such a prominent place in Castile's (and later León's) plural monarchy. I should note that her attempts to build and maintain her networks of clients were not "political" acts, strictly speaking; the bonds between her and her nobles were personal, affective, and based in self-interest rather than any collective benefit. Although we can see the beginnings of politicization in Berenguela's lifetime—particularly in the large assemblies summoned to approve certain royal acts—she was still a lord, and ruled according to the norms of lordship.³³ The assemblies "of the whole kingdom" that she and her contemporaries convened were there to endorse the monarchs' will, not to influence it.³⁴ Even so, the legitimation and exercise of royal authority required fidelity, especially from lay and ecclesiastical magnates. When that fidelity was lacking, the magnates were capable of reconfiguring the plural monarchy into something more to their liking. At its most dramatic, this could involve the overthrow of one ruler and the elevation of another; less extreme cases might produce a change in regents, as Berenguela herself discovered (Chapter 4), or the failure of a monarch's plans for his succession, as happened to Alfonso IX (Chapter 6).

While all European monarchy relied on the fidelity of magnates to make its authority credible, Iberian monarchs may have been especially dependent on it. In Iberia, unlike France or England, monarchy had no sacred function; kings had no power to heal with a touch, nor could they claim the mantle of a saintly predecessor like Charlemagne or Edward the Confessor. Instead, their kingship was created and celebrated in a context of martial lordship. The rituals that made an Iberian king—the knighting, the homage performed by subjects, the popular acclamation of the new ruler—arose from lordly culture and from the vestiges of elective monarchy. Lineal descent from the ruling family was important, and of course monarchs ascribed their position to the grace of God; but the consent of the kingdom's elite had a proportionally greater significance in the absence of divine sanctions like anointing or association with a royal saint.³⁵ Noble support was therefore essential to a monarch's effective exercise of power. And patronage was a key ingredient in creating that support.

Reconstructing patronage networks can be difficult. One important tool is the confirmation lists of royal diplomas, which list the prelates and nobles

who confirm or witness the monarch's act. The men—they were virtually always men—who confirmed royal diplomas were the prelates and nobles who constituted the royal court, or *curia*.³⁶ There has been considerable debate about whether, and in what eras, confirmers were personally present for the act recorded in the diploma; the consensus seems to be that confirmers were direct witnesses in the eleventh century, and that by the thirteenth century they were listed more or less as a formality.³⁷ Nevertheless, whether or not they observed the act in person, the fact that certain nobles or prelates are named in a confirmation list indicates that they had the favor of their monarch and were part of his (or her, or their) entourage.³⁸

Especially among lay confirmers, one can even discern the degree of royal favor that each magnate enjoyed. In both Castilian and Leonese diplomas, the order of the confirmers reflected status; those who were most firmly in the monarch's good graces confirmed at the top of the list.³⁹ This tendency is even more pronounced in Leonese diplomas than in Castilian ones, since in Castilian chancery practice the royal officers—majordomo, *alférez*, and *merino mayor*—confirmed first, second, and last, respectively.⁴⁰ In León, these offices held no special position in confirmation lists, which makes the role of royal preference more visible.

Leonese diplomas also often list the royal tenancies that each noble held, although the Castilian chancery had stopped doing this by the early thirteenth century. In both León and Castile circa 1200, the tenancies of royal properties were still bestowed on and revoked from magnates at the monarch's discretion. The gift of tenancies was an important way for the monarch to reward supporters—tenants enjoyed “the temporary delegation of royal lordship in a specific town or area.”⁴¹ Within their tenancies, magnates acted as the crown's agents, defending the land, administering justice, and collecting rents, part of which they retained for themselves. By the early thirteenth century, these rents were the main appeal of tenancies; nobles often assigned the actual management of their tenancies to their agents, and reaped the benefits in absentia.⁴² Monarchs' control over the distribution of tenancies means that shifts in that distribution reflect deliberate shifts in royal policy. Tenancies therefore offer a vivid picture of royal patronage of the nobility and its vicissitudes over time. By extension, their distribution represents the crown's key means of exercising and enforcing its lordly rights.⁴³

This picture comes into even clearer focus when royal diplomas are studied alongside individual charters.⁴⁴ Most Castilian and Leonese charters were

dated not only by the calendar, but also by the reigning monarch and important local lords. A Castilian charter from 1217 includes the following dating formula:

This charter was made in Palencia, on the ides of October, in the era MCCLV. In the reign of King Fernando with Queen Berenguela, his mother, in Toledo and Castile. Tello being bishop in Palencia. Don Lope Díaz, the king's *alférez*. Don Gonzalo Rodríguez, the king's majordomo. Gonzalo Pérez de Arnales, *merino mayor*. Gonzalo Pérez, *merino* in Palencia.⁴⁵

The attention to officers, especially court officers, is typical of Castilian charters and can help round out our knowledge of who held these offices and when. But the reference to the current monarchs also reveals popular conceptions of the monarchy. Charters are the records of people who were still, in some sense, elites; they had enough wealth or property to participate in these transactions in the first place, and to hire a scribe to record them. However, they were generally not attached to the court, and therefore present a window onto social strata below the monarchs and magnates who populate royal diplomas. The issuers of individual charters did not always identify queens along with kings, so a queen's appearance in a dating formula represents a conscious recognition of her authority.

Dating formulas in León took a slightly different tone. This example is from 1222:

This charter was made in the era MCCLX, in the month of April, in the reign of King Alfonso in Le[ón] and in Galicia, Asturias, and Extremadura. Pedro Muñoz being archbishop of the see of Compostela. In León, Rodrigo Álvarez; in Astorga, Pedro Andrés; in Zamora, Martín Rodrigo II [being bishops]. Fernando Fernández, the king's *majo[r]domo*, also holding Zamora and Benavente. The king's *alférez*, Álvaro Pérez.⁴⁶

Like the earlier Castilian example, this charter names bishops and court officers. However, it also identifies the lord who is tenant of ("holding," *tenens*) the royal towns of Zamora and Benavente. By circa 1200 Castilian charters sometimes included this information, but less consistently than Leonese charters did.

Used together, the lists of tenancies in diplomas and charters make it possible to track the distribution of Leonese tenancies in detail. For Castile the record is necessarily less thorough, because clerical and chancery norms make this information scarcer. Scholars have often turned to such techniques to study the Castilian and Leonese nobility. Here, however, I apply them to the study of the monarchy, and especially of queenship.⁴⁷

Whenever it is possible to identify a particular town or castle as the property of a queen (as it often is), one can usually also discover which nobles held the tenancy of that town or castle over time. Those nobles are the queen's clients. Queens chose tenants for their own possessions; charters record that these men held such tenancies *de manu regine*, from the queen's hand.⁴⁸ Queens also had their own porters (*porteros*), agents responsible for delivering possession of towns and castles to tenants.⁴⁹ The existence of regional porters supports the conclusion that queens had discretion in selecting their tenants, and were not merely providing a nominal cover for the king's acts. That discretion, in turn, means that their personal properties allowed them to dispense patronage on a fairly grand scale. Under Visigothic law, a wife's arras had to represent at least 10 percent of her husband's property⁵⁰—a considerable quantity for a queen. Berenguela awarded the tenancies of her personal domains to some of her kingdoms' highest-ranking nobles, proving that her tenancies were rich enough to be desirable even among great magnates. Castilian and Leonese queens commanded significant wealth, and could thus attract clients from the loftiest social strata.

This matters, because the support of the kingdom's most powerful magnates made a queen much more effective when she chose to act in her own interests. Not all queens had such opportunities; in England, for example, great magnates did not ordinarily attend at court in the thirteenth century. English queens therefore chose their allies from among lower-ranking knightly families.⁵¹ Such allies were certainly useful, but they did not command the vast resources that were at the disposal of great nobles. The noble partisans who made Berenguela's bids for power possible would not have been nearly so successful if they had come from modest backgrounds and claimed correspondingly modest quantities of wealth, fighting men, and castles.

Gifts given "from the queen's hand" were therefore central to her power, both formal and informal. Reconstructing Berenguela's patronage network is essential to understanding how she turned Iberian concepts of plural monarchy to her advantage.

Chronicles and Chroniclers

Just as Berenguela herself has attracted scholarly attention in recent years, so has the remarkable collection of chronicles produced by Castilian and Leonese writers in the thirteenth century. Their authors—all prelates and all affiliated with the royal court, which saddles them with a profoundly royalist perspective but also gives them an intimate view of events—were eyewitnesses to and participants in the history they recorded. And all of them profess admiration and respect for Berenguela, whose contributions to the kingdom they discuss at length. This is a very unusual fate for powerful medieval women; most queens were overlooked by clerical commentators,⁵² and those who made themselves impossible to ignore were at least as likely to draw ire as applause. The chroniclers' uniform esteem for Berenguela reflects the inherent variety of medieval attitudes toward women,⁵³ but it also reflects the extent of her power. Few authors were apparently willing to risk her anger, and if any did, their texts were not likely to survive.⁵⁴

Berenguela commissioned one chronicle herself: the *Chronicon mundi* of Lucas "of Tuy," who is first visible as a deacon at San Isidoro in the city of León and was later elected bishop of Tuy (r. 1239–1249).⁵⁵ The *Chronicon mundi* ("Chronicle of the World," hereafter CM) is often said to have a pro-Leonese bias, and indeed it pays more attention to events in León than the chronicles written by Castilians do.⁵⁶ However, like many chronicles commissioned by queens, it does not focus attention on its patron.⁵⁷ Berenguela is less prominent in Lucas's text than in those of his two contemporaries and fellow historians, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada and Juan of Osma.

Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada was Navarrese by birth and cosmopolitan by training. Like any ambitious and able twelfth-century cleric, he studied in Bologna and Paris, the intellectual centers for canon law and theology, respectively. Probably in the course of treaty negotiations between Navarre and Castile in 1207, Rodrigo came to the notice of Alfonso VIII of Castile and entered that king's service. Royal patronage elevated him rapidly thereafter. By the fall of 1208 he had been elected bishop of Osma, but he had not even been confirmed in that post before the cathedral chapter of Toledo elected him its archbishop in late December 1208 or early January 1209.⁵⁸

Archbishop Rodrigo's literary magnum opus was the *Historia de rebus Hispanie* ("History of Spain," hereafter DRH). It has its drawbacks; it borrows heavily from Lucas of Tuy, it is sometimes surprisingly inaccurate chronologically, and although commissioned by Fernando III, it often seems

more concerned with promoting the see of Toledo than with any particular royal project.⁵⁹ But as the foremost prelate in Castile—and, eventually, the primate of Spain⁶⁰—Rodrigo was a frequent companion to his monarchs and a participant in some of the most momentous events of his age. This makes his chronicle invaluable for the study of Berenguela's career.

The third great Castilian chronicle of the early thirteenth century was, until recently, virtually unknown. It survived the Middle Ages in only one manuscript copy, made in the fifteenth century, which includes neither a title nor the name of its author.⁶¹ The title it carries now, *Chronica latina regum Castellae* ("Latin Chronicle of the Monarchs of Castile," hereafter CLRC), was given by Georges Crot, who recalled the chronicle to historians' attention in 1912.⁶² The modern consensus is that the CLRC's author was Juan, bishop of Osma (and later of Burgos) and chancellor to Fernando III.⁶³

There has been considerable scholarly debate about the relationship between Juan of Osma (as he is generally known) and his monarchs. Some historians have seen him as Fernando III's partisan and Berenguela's opponent, who downplayed the queen's role in his chronicle so as to exalt her son. This attitude is usually contrasted to those of Lucas of Tuy and especially Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, who is said to be Berenguela's partisan and to slight Fernando III whenever possible.⁶⁴

If this were the case, it would still signify that Berenguela had remarkable power in the realm, to command the support of the archbishop of Toledo even in a chronicle commissioned by her son, and conversely to earn such pronounced and systematic disapproval from the royal chancellor. But there is extensive evidence that Juan of Osma was actually Berenguela's ally. And it was much to his advantage to be on good terms with Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, for the archbishop of Toledo was the titular head of the royal chancery; his approval would have been necessary for Juan to serve in the office of chancellor, essentially as Rodrigo's deputy.⁶⁵ Finally, even the most cursory comparison of Juan's portrayal of Berenguela with other narrative accounts of twelfth- and thirteenth-century queens demonstrates that Juan was far more generous to his queen than many of his contemporaries were to theirs, no matter how much power the woman in question exercised. If Juan meant to criticize Berenguela, he did it very subtly. And medieval chroniclers, especially those protected by a powerful (and presumably sympathetic) king, rarely felt it necessary to be subtle in their attacks on prominent women. Nevertheless, there are occasional discrepancies in the ways the three chronicles describe Berenguela's role, and these will be considered as they arise.

His proximity to the monarchs, to other powerful court figures, and (not least) to the documentary record of the royal chancery itself made Juan of Osma another well-informed eyewitness to the events he recorded. Indeed, he was arguably better informed than either Archbishop Rodrigo or Lucas of Tuy.⁶⁶ He may also have begun writing earlier—perhaps as early as the mid-1220s, while the CM and DRH both appear to have been written starting in the 1230s.⁶⁷ That would make the CLRC one of the rare medieval chronicles to have been written “journalistically,” as events unfolded, rather than at the remove of memory.

The CM, DRH, and CLRC are three great monuments of medieval historiography in Iberia. Regrettably, though, none of them covers the whole span of Berenguela’s lifetime, much less that of her son. It is therefore necessary to use—with caution—the text known as the *Primera Crónica General de España* (PCG). Philological study has shown that the edition published by Ramón Menéndez Pidal does not accurately reflect the chronicle composed under Berenguela’s grandson Alfonso X (r. 1252–1284) and his son Sancho IV (r. 1284–1295), and better known as the *Estoria de Espanna*.⁶⁸ However, because no better edition of the later portions of the *Estoria de Espanna* yet exists, I will occasionally make use of Menéndez Pidal’s PCG, using the name he gave it so as to be clear about the source.

These narratives elaborate and confirm what the documentary records—the royal diplomas and individual charters—reveal about Berenguela’s personal properties and network of patronage; they often go so far as to identify her clients and allies by name. But they also afford us contemporary representations of the complex partnerships between Berenguela and the men and women with whom she shared power. What I have tried to accomplish here, then, is a case study of how one woman exercised queenly power over the course of her lifetime. Berenguela’s career demands a reevaluation of received ideas about monarchy and gender; it also throws more light on the dynamic relationship between royal power and noble power. And, not least important, it challenges a national myth whose exclusively male orientation has no basis in history.

Chapter 1

Infanta and Heir, 1180–1197

On April 5, 1181, King Alfonso VIII of Castile and his queen, Leonor, rejoiced in the birth of their first son.¹ Apart from their own delight as young parents—the king was about twenty-six years old, the queen about twenty-one—the couple could take pride in having fulfilled their dynastic obligation to provide an heir for the Castilian throne. Alfonso VIII even commemorated the event in his diplomas: “This charter was made . . . on the third day after King Sancho, son of the aforementioned Alfonso, illustrious king of Castile, was born in Burgos.”²

Yet although Sancho was the monarchs’ firstborn son, he was not their only child. The year before, Leonor had had another baby, a daughter, named Berenguela in honor of Alfonso VIII’s grandmother. Her birth had not been attended by the fanfare that surrounded her brother’s; in fact, the first surviving mention of her occurs a month after Sancho was born, when she was already about a year old.³ Neither Alfonso VIII nor Leonor could have guessed that it was Berenguela, not Sancho, who would shape the future of their kingdom.

The lives of children, even royal ones, in the Middle Ages are a vexing subject for study. Information about them is scarce, and the picture is generally worse for daughters than for sons. Still, fate thrust Berenguela into the limelight even in early childhood. While the documentary record of her early years is far from complete, the years she spent as the putative heir to her father’s kingdom offer a glimpse of how Castile’s plural monarchy adapted under strain.

Those adaptations illustrate the challenges that faced a woman in the unusual position of royal heir, and that would in fact confront Berenguela herself decades later. Her parents’ preference for a male heir was pronounced.

Yet neither the documentary nor the narrative sources claim that their preference was due to an inherent feminine incapacity for rule. Instead, the sources reveal the crises that could erupt when a woman inherited a throne, and the efforts that Berenguela's father made to circumvent them. Within the patriarchal confines of Berenguela's culture, these concerns were as much practical as ideological, and the monarchy tried to shape practical solutions to them. Far from worrying about the dangers of a woman in power, the Castilians were anxious about what would happen if that woman *lost* power to a man—that is, to the foreigner who would become her husband. Their fears owed more to xenophobia than to misogyny.

Finally, the early history of Berenguela and her sisters demonstrates that women and girls could be sources of power even when they were not in the line of succession. Among other purposes, the marriages arranged for Berenguela and her sister Urraca in 1188 were designed to enhance the prestige of their father and his kingdom. This, in turn, put the *infantas* in positions of considerable strength relative to their prospective husbands. Berenguela's childhood thus illustrates the kinds of power a royal daughter could acquire as a member (even a minor one) of the plural monarchy—even at times when she was too young to use it. A childhood spent in the halo of such power gave Berenguela and her peers a foretaste of the roles they would play as adults.

“My Daughter the Queen”

The jubilation at the birth of Alfonso VIII and Leonor's son Sancho did not last long. In late July of 1181, when he was only about three months old, Sancho died.⁴ The royal monastery of Las Huelgas, where Sancho was buried, preserves a lament written for him:

Weep, wretched Castile,
weep for King Sancho. . . .
Consider your plight
as that of a father weeping for his son . . .⁵

Amid their grief for their son, Alfonso VIII and Leonor faced another loss: that of their kingdom's heir. Sancho's place had to be filled, and there was

only one other royal child available. In 1181, Berenguela became the new heir-designate of Castile. Presumably, she could also have inherited the kingdom if her father had died before Sancho was born, but her status had never been officially recognized during that first year of her life. Now, however, she co-issued Alfonso VIII's diplomas, just as her brother had. By the end of July, very shortly after Sancho's death, Alfonso VIII was carrying out his formal acts "together with my wife, Queen Leonor, and with my daughter, Infanta Berenguela."⁶

Co-issuing royal diplomas was a privilege usually reserved for sons and, especially, for heirs. Berenguela is known to have co-issued only one diploma prior to Sancho's death: the renewal of a privilege made by Infanta Sancha Raimúndez, Alfonso VIII's great-aunt, to the Knights Hospitaller.⁷ Sancha had granted the Hospitallers lands in the Infantazgo, her personal domain, much of which lay on the uncertain border between Castile and León and which Alfonso VIII had just claimed for himself. While it is hardly unheard-of for daughters to co-issue diplomas with their brothers, it is uncommon; Berenguela was probably included in this act because the Infantazgo often (as in Sancha's case) became the property of royal women, and she therefore had a direct interest in it.⁸

By contrast, regularly co-issuing diplomas asserted Berenguela's formal status as heir. Likewise, Alfonso VIII's diplomas now sometimes styled his toddler daughter as "queen," *regina*: "I, Alfonso, by the grace of God king of Castile, together with my wife, Queen Leonor . . . and with my daughter, Queen Berenguela."⁹ Throughout the twelfth century, Leonese and Castilian kings had bestowed the title *rex* on their intended heirs, a tactic meant to clarify the line of succession and prevent disputes after the king's death.¹⁰ Alfonso VIII had already done this for his infant son, who appeared in diplomas throughout his life (and in the lament composed after his death) as "King Sancho," *rex Sancius*. Calling Berenguela a queen marked her as Alfonso VIII's chosen successor.

In theory, Castilian custom allowed women to inherit the throne. In practice, it would have been difficult to make good on Berenguela's claim to rule. The general reluctance to accept a female heir to Castile is evident from the almost total lack of contemporary charters whose dating formulas name Berenguela along with her parents. The three that do mention her appear to have been made in the presence of the royal court, which indicates Alfonso VIII's desire to have her seen as heir but not any corresponding popular perception.¹¹ Male heirs, by contrast, are regularly included in the dating

formulas of individual charters. The king and queen hoped to have another son, who, although younger than Berenguela, would take precedence as heir by virtue of his gender. But years of subsequent pregnancies produced only daughters. The first, Sancha, was born in March 1182 and promptly joined Berenguela in co-issuing diplomas, just as younger sons would do. But Sancha fared only slightly better than her brother; she disappears from the documentary record after February 1184, and probably died soon afterward.¹²

By this time, Berenguela was no longer accompanying the royal court. She ceased to co-issue diplomas regularly at the end of 1181, and thereafter co-issued only a few surviving acts each year; this suggests that she did not normally reside with her parents. Although the fact that she continued to co-issue at all signals that she was still Castile's official heir, her general absence from diplomas stands in marked contrast to the custom for royal sons. When Leonor did finally deliver another boy, he began co-issuing diplomas soon after his birth—just as Sancho had—and continued to do so throughout his childhood. Berenguela's comparative invisibility had its roots in her parents' (and the kingdom's) ambivalence about a female heir. During the 1180s, Leonor was only in her twenties, and could reasonably expect to bear another son. As heir, therefore, Berenguela remained replaceable.

It is not clear where she was raised during her absences from court. The diplomas she did co-issue during this period were made in places roughly grouped around Toledo and Burgos, which may mean that Berenguela resided primarily in or near those cities.¹³ That interpretation is made both more and less likely by the fact that both Toledo and Burgos were much frequented by the court. Alfonso VIII and Leonor may have preferred to have their daughter raised in places that they themselves visited often. On the other hand, their regular presence in or near those cities simply makes it more statistically likely that they happened to be near Toledo or Burgos at the times that Berenguela was with them.¹⁴

In one instance, Berenguela's presence in Burgos may have been documented. In 1187, a privilege to the royal monastery of Las Huelgas, which Leonor and Alfonso VIII had recently founded,¹⁵ was confirmed and sealed by neighboring abbots "at the request of the venerable infanta and the abbess and convent" of Las Huelgas. If the "venerable infanta" was Berenguela, then the diploma suggests that she resided, at least occasionally, with the nuns of Las Huelgas.¹⁶ The only other infanta in the royal family in 1187 was Berenguela's sister Urraca, who was about a year old. No doubt the charter's reference to the "request" of an infanta is formulaic to some degree. But it would

have been easier to obtain a nominal command from seven-year-old Berenguela than from her infant sister. Moreover, in 1187 Berenguela was her father's chosen heir, which made her involvement much more material than Urraca's.

Berenguela's role in the creation of this charter also offers some indication of the authority she held as a child. For abbots to confirm a privilege "at the request" (*ad preces*) of an infanta is uncommon. Women of the royal family witnessed Las Huelgas' charters fairly frequently, but took no formal agency in those charters unless they were members of the monastic community.¹⁷ Berenguela's "request" for confirmation suggests that she held some personal authority, probably derived from her status as heir. At seven, she was almost certainly not acting on her own initiative. But her placement in an authoritative role in childhood reflects the value set on a hereditary right to the throne. Despite her age, despite her gender, despite even the fact that she was not widely acknowledged as part of Castile's plural monarchy, Berenguela's position as heir-presumptive gave her power.

Another document from the same year also suggests her link to Las Huelgas. In Burgos that June, Berenguela and her infant sister Urraca joined Alfonso VIII and Leonor in issuing a diploma that granted Las Huelgas a substantial endowment.¹⁸ The infantas' inclusion—the monarchs acted "with the consent of our daughters Berenguela and Urraca"—may indicate that one or both of them were then living with the convent. In the twelfth century, family monastic foundations were often used for just this purpose, as places to raise wellborn girls during their childhood.¹⁹ Berenguela's own children, boys as well as girls, would also frequent Las Huelgas in their early years.

Compared to the norms for male heirs, Berenguela was marginalized in both royal and individual documents of the 1180s. Still, her physical and symbolic absences from court never meant that she had become inconsequential. In fact, she was about to become very prominent in her parents' plans for Castile's future—a shift that was perhaps prompted by their first encounters with her future husband.

The Curia of Carrión

Women, even those with a clear right of succession, were rarely accepted as monarchs unless they were married. Berenguela's great-great-grandmother,

Urraca, had inherited León-Castile from her father, Alfonso VI, in the early twelfth century. But her nobles and prelates had consented to give her the throne only on the condition that she marry. The groom they chose was Alfons I of Aragón, “the Battler.” The fact that this match might precipitate the union of Aragón and Castile—or that the bride and groom almost instantly despised each other—was of small consequence compared to the prospect of a woman ruling alone. As heir, therefore, Berenguela required a husband. He would give Castile a king to rally behind when Alfonso VIII died, and a masculine authority figure to manage the many aspects of ruling for which women were deemed unsuited.

Alfonso VIII therefore set out to make a match for his oldest daughter—preferably one that brought prestige to his kingdom and dynasty. By accident or design, his marriage negotiations on her behalf coincided with the accession of a new king in León, Alfonso IX, whose relationship with Castile also had to be negotiated. Alfonso VIII tried to resolve both Berenguela’s marriage and his business with León in a single stroke at the so-called Curia of Carrión in 1188. By most measures, both efforts were doomed to failure, but while they lasted they illustrated the power royal daughters could transmit and symbolize, even without ever holding authority themselves.

Fernando II of León died early in 1188. His throne was briefly disputed between his two surviving sons—seventeen-year-old Alfonso, and Sancho Fernández, the child of Fernando II’s late marriage to the Castilian noblewoman Urraca López de Haro.²⁰ Victory over his infant brother, and accession to the Leonese throne as Alfonso IX, landed the young monarch with a kingdom of headstrong magnates and a royal fisc dissipated by his father’s generosity to them.²¹ He had also inherited a thirty-year-old dispute with Castile over the border region known as the Tierra de Campos—a dispute that had begun with a woman.

Infanta Sancha Raimúndez, daughter of Queen Urraca and sister of Alfonso VII, had been the latest royal woman to control the *Infantazgo*, a grouping of significant territories within León-Castile. Among those territories was a substantial portion of the Tierra de Campos, an agriculturally rich and economically valuable region, which Sancha held independently for thirty years. That land should have reverted to the crown at Sancha’s death; but when she died in 1159, there were two kings in León-Castile, not one.²²

Alfonso VII had died in 1157, two years before. Falling back on the Iberian custom of partible inheritance, he had divided his kingdom between his two sons.²³ To the elder, Sancho, he gave the eastern half: Castile. To the

younger, Fernando, he gave the western half: León. Alfonso VII seems never to have specified a line of demarcation between the two kingdoms, however; this was problematic enough in itself, but its repercussions were most grave where the new border encountered the personal dominion of Infanta Sancha in the Tierra de Campos.²⁴ Alfonso VII had ordered that when Sancha died, her lands should be incorporated into Castile. But both her nephews coveted her properties, and Fernando challenged Sancho for them across the two kingdoms' vague frontier. So began a border war that was still being fought when Fernando's son, Alfonso IX, came to the throne and found himself facing his much more firmly established cousin, Alfonso VIII, Sancho's son.²⁵

Technically, León and Castile were at peace in 1188, under the terms of the five-year-old Treaty of Fresno-Lavandera.²⁶ But treaties did not always survive a direct collision with self-interest. And Alfonso IX's predicament was further complicated by the fact that his stepmother, Urraca López de Haro, had rejoined her family in Castile—along with her son, Sancho Fernández, whose claim to the Leonese crown still made him a potentially serious rival. Worse, Urraca's brother, Diego López de Haro, had long been Alfonso VIII's most trusted noble counselor.²⁷ If Urraca López gained influence with the Castilian king, she might acquire the military strength to confront Alfonso IX on her son's behalf.

Diego López de Haro had been in León during his sister's marriage to Fernando II. After the king died, he stopped confirming royal diplomas and lost his Leonese tenancies,²⁸ evidently as a result of the conflict between his sister and the new king. But Diego López did not immediately return to the Castilian court; he did not confirm for Alfonso VIII until late summer or early fall, though when he did reappear in Castilian diplomas he had already recovered his old post as *alférez*.²⁹ During the spring and summer of 1188, then, Alfonso IX had an opportunity to establish an alliance with Castile, free from the problematic influence of the Haro.

The instability of Alfonso IX's position in these early months of his reign shows in his diplomas. When a king came to the throne, he was often called upon to confirm earlier monarchs' grants and privileges, especially those to religious institutions. This gave him a chance to curry favor with the prelates and monasteries of his realm, but also to legitimize his succession by emphasizing his royal descent. Thus, in a May 1188 confirmation of the privileges and exemptions of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Alfonso IX declared himself to be acting in the tradition "of our most invincible and most victorious father, the lord king Fernando." Fernando II was buried at

Santiago de Compostela, and Alfonso IX added that he confirmed its privileges “for the soul of our father, who rests in well-deserved veneration.”³⁰ And in confirming privileges granted to the council of Orense by that city’s bishop, the young king noted that such privileges had been conferred “with the permission and consent of my [great-]grandmother, Queen Urraca, and of her son don Alfonso [VII], emperor of the Spains, and also of her sister, Queen doña Teresa [of Portugal].”³¹ By acting in accordance with his prestigious (or at least royal) ancestors, Alfonso IX was establishing his pedigree, and with it the legitimacy of his reign.

For his part, Alfonso VIII must have observed his cousin’s accession in León with trepidation. Though by no means old, he was considerably older than the new Leonese king, and he still had no living sons. Alfonso IX was his closest male relative and could make a credible claim to the throne of Castile if Alfonso VIII died—and a mature, seated king would certainly prevail against a preadolescent infanta. The only way to protect Berenguela’s rights in Castile was to find her a husband.

The Hohenstaufen Alliance

On the royal marriage market, the fact that Berenguela was heir to Castile considerably increased her appeal as a prospective bride. Alfonso VIII was therefore able to woo a very eligible candidate: fifteen-year-old Conrad of Hohenstaufen, duke of Rothenburg and son of the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick I Barbarossa.

Besides the distinction of his imperial lineage, Conrad was an attractive choice because there was little risk that he would become Holy Roman Emperor himself. He had three living older brothers, the eldest of whom had already been crowned King of the Romans and thus designated the successor to the imperial throne. Conrad was likely to inherit only a duchy or two; he would thereby increase Castile’s domains rather than annex Castile to the empire. In April 1188 Alfonso VIII’s ambassadors ratified a marriage treaty at Frederick I’s court in Seligenstadt.³²

Although Berenguela was almost certainly not consulted about the marriage negotiations in any meaningful way, the Castilian envoys acted for her as well as for her father, and the treaty emphasized her acceptance of its terms. Alfonso VIII made agreements “with the consent of my daughter Berenguela” just as Frederick made them “with the consent of my son

Conrad.”³³ Her status, however, was still conditional, and the treaty’s provisions for succession in Castile under a wide variety of circumstances reveal the difficulties that faced a female heir to a throne.

For one thing, the treaty did not guarantee that Berenguela would become queen of Castile. If Alfonso VIII had a legitimate son living when he died, that son would inherit the kingdom. Only if there were no such son would Berenguela “and her husband Conrad with her” succeed to the throne. But if a brother of Berenguela’s inherited Castile and then died without issue, Berenguela again became heir. If she also died without children, either before or after becoming queen, then the throne went not to Conrad but to Alfonso VIII’s nearest living relative or chosen heir.³⁴ Conrad had to take an oath that he would respect his father-in-law’s wishes in this regard. Such stipulations reflect Castile’s profound discomfort with a female heir. However—in the terms of this treaty, at least—that discomfort stemmed less from defects inherent in the female sex than from the real possibility that Berenguela’s husband, a foreigner, would take power from her and rule the kingdom for himself. In that case, the interests of his German allies and entourage would surely take precedence over the interests of Castile, its Church, and its nobles.

Anxiety that Conrad might seize too much power is evident in other clauses of the treaty, which attempt to protect Berenguela’s rights as heir by delineating her and Conrad’s respective roles. If Alfonso VIII died before Berenguela and Conrad had children, then—since the couple would presumably be living in Conrad’s own lands—Conrad had to select nobles to serve as viceroys in Castile, “with the counsel of his wife Berenguela, and he may not do otherwise.”³⁵ These viceroys, in turn, would swear fealty to both Berenguela and Conrad and serve them as they would serve any monarch, in spite of their physical absence. Nevertheless, Berenguela and Conrad both had to come to Castile in person in order to be acclaimed as its new sovereigns: “the kingdom shall be given to his wife and to him along with her; and it shall not be given to Conrad unless his wife Berenguela is present and orders it done, not otherwise.”³⁶ In other words, Berenguela’s hereditary right made her the source of legitimate royal authority. It could not pass to Conrad without her formal, public consent. And even after she had transmitted that authority to her husband, she retained it for herself as well; the fealty of the noble viceroys and the cession of Castile itself were given to both spouses. This was manifestly a case of plural monarchy. And as the inheriting monarch, Berenguela held authority over Conrad in spite of his gender; kingship was hers to bestow (and, in theory, to deny) at will.

But what if Berenguela were somehow unable to come to Castile to be acclaimed as queen?

Also, if when the king [Alfonso VIII] has died without a legitimate son, Conrad's wife, Berenguela, the king's daughter, cannot come to Castile (perhaps because she is ill), Conrad shall come and bring the children he has with his wife, if there are any; and the kingdom will be given to them [the children]. If he does not have children, he shall come nevertheless to defend the kingdom, and the men [of Castile] shall help him in the defense of the kingdom and serve him as their lord, except that he shall not have power to alter or alienate [possession of] castles or towns. And when his wife is able to come, she shall come, and when she comes the kingdom shall be given to her and to Conrad, her husband, with her.³⁷

The aim of this passage is to prevent Conrad from claiming the throne of Castile without his wife present. Ideally, he could offer Berenguela's children in her place; they would be the new heirs to the kingdom, and their royal status could be acknowledged and the vacancy on the throne filled with no danger to the principle of legitimate succession. Even in the absence of children, however, Conrad could not simply wait for Berenguela to accompany him to Castile. There was real danger in an empty throne, which outsiders might see as an invitation. Conrad therefore had to "defend" the kingdom—to act in the king's capacity as warleader and protect Castile until Berenguela could arrive to claim it. However, while the treaty expected the nobles and towns of Castile to assist him in this effort, it also limited the regalian powers available to him. By depriving him of the authority to "alter or alienate" castles and towns, it restricted his access to the royal fisc. It also prevented him from ejecting Castilian magnates from their tenancies so as to replace them with his own men.

But if there was danger in an empty throne, there was also danger in one occupied only by a woman—which some contemporaries considered the same thing.³⁸

If Conrad dies after having a son or daughter with the king's daughter Berenguela, then the king's daughter Berenguela and her children shall come to Castile, and the kingdom shall be given to them, and

the people of the land shall await their arrival and protect the kingdom and not give it to anyone except them.³⁹

There was a real concern that someone else might seize Berenguela's throne before she got there—and that the usurper would have the support of the Castilian people. A woman with no husband—a woman who, moreover, had married a foreigner and lived outside Castile—was an unwelcome candidate for the succession. Her interests and the kingdom's could no longer be assumed to be the same. And her gender limited her ability to exercise some of the most essential functions of monarchy, particularly that of warfare. This problem was not entirely obviated even if Berenguela had a son. The treaty specifies nothing about how Castile should be ruled if Berenguela and her children were its only heirs. Yet it implies that Berenguela could transmit royal legitimacy to her children much as she would have transmitted it to her husband. This clause says that when she and her children arrive in Castile, “the kingdom shall be given *to them (eis)*”—that is, to Berenguela as well as to her offspring, since in every other scenario Berenguela also receives the kingdom along with or instead of her children.⁴⁰ While the children were legitimate heirs to the throne by virtue of descent, their rights could not supersede their mother's. Berenguela's own claim to Castile had to be recognized for her children's claim to be valid. That fact would be of crucial importance when Berenguela did succeed to Castile.

However, the treaty's protection of Berenguela's hereditary rights extended only so far. In the event that Berenguela outlived both Conrad and any children of the union while her father was still alive, she was to be allowed to return to Castile if she chose, and she would keep the properties Conrad had given her as arras. But the question of whether she would still inherit Castile in such a case was left unanswered.

Alfonso VIII's envoys, then, were trying to circumvent the problems that would almost certainly arise if Berenguela were to inherit, with or without Conrad beside her. These clauses were not simply wishful thinking. Castile's nobles, four of its prelates, and representatives of its major cities and towns had sworn in advance to obey the treaty, and they were identified by name at its conclusion.⁴¹ Furthermore, “the people of Castile” were required, after the wedding, to swear to Berenguela and Conrad in person that they would observe the pact. By demanding the express, formal consent of his magnates, prelates, and town elites, Alfonso VIII had done as much as he could to build consensus behind Berenguela's right to the throne.

In addition to the thorny issues of the succession, the Treaty of Seligenstadt was concerned with a subject fundamental to many royal marriage agreements—the transfer of property. It was still customary in Iberia for a prospective husband to provide his wife with an arras, or dowry. Therefore, the treaty's first concern—after stating that Berenguela and Conrad were in fact to marry—was to list the German properties that Conrad would give his wife as a “wedding gift, which among the Romans [i.e., the Germans] is called in the vulgar tongue *doaire*, and among the Spanish *arras*.”⁴² Berenguela brought no dowry to the marriage, except for the hope of one day giving her husband all of Castile. But her arras, unlike a dowry, gave her personal property within her husband's demesne where she could exercise independent authority, bestow patronage, and manage her own wealth.

At the conclusion of the treaty, the principal parties added their personal vows to keep the promises they had made. Not surprisingly, such vows were made by Frederick I; by his eldest son, Henry VI, who was already King of the Romans; by Alfonso VIII; and by Conrad. But both Berenguela and Leonor also took individual oaths to observe the treaty, using the same language as the men. Their pledges, like Berenguela's “consent” earlier in the treaty, gave the queen and infanta a degree of agency both in the creation of the treaty and in its fulfillment. Indeed, by the treaty's provisions, Leonor would retain considerable authority in Castile even if she were widowed, since Berenguela and Conrad were enjoined to respect her independent rights within her own arras properties.⁴³ The women's formal involvement in the treaty indicates that their consent and participation were both necessary and valued—a striking contrast to the view that wellborn brides were passive tokens in alliances forged by and to the sole advantage of their male relatives.⁴⁴

The treaty required Conrad to come to Castile for his betrothal to Berenguela within the next few months. He did as promised, and Alfonso VIII received him in a celebration known now as the Curia of Carrión.

The Lord-King Alfonso

In July 1188, Alfonso VIII summoned a *curia plena* in the town of Carrión, in the Tierra de Campos. This was a general assembly consisting of greater and lesser nobles, greater and lesser prelates, and—perhaps—delegates from major cities and towns. The Curia of Carrión is traditionally thought to

have included such delegates, and therefore to have been a significant step in the evolution of the Castilian Cortes. It has been well studied elsewhere in that context.⁴⁵ For the purposes of this study, I will consider only two aspects of the Curia of Carrión: Berenguela's marriage, and the knighting of Alfonso IX.

These were triumphal moments for Castile as a kingdom and for Alfonso VIII as its king. They were performed in such a way as to confer great honor upon him, especially relative to the other men involved. But both events were made possible only through his daughters.

Berenguela's marriage treaty required Conrad to come to Castile in order to betroth her and receive the fealty of his putative future subjects, and the Curia of Carrión provided the setting for both acts. The assembly of nobles, prelates, and (perhaps) town delegates could participate in and observe the splendid ostentation of the royal betrothal, and would also be immediately available to swear fealty to the young couple. So Conrad traveled to Carrión in the spectacular heat of a Castilian midsummer to meet and pledge faith with his eight-year-old bride.

The betrothal and oaths, however, were not the only ceremonies awaiting Conrad in Carrión:

in the same town, that is, Carrión, Conrad, son of Frederick, Emperor of the Romans . . . was made a knight by the king of Castile. And the king betrothed him to his daughter doña Berenguela, who was scarcely eight years old, and caused homage to be done . . . by the whole kingdom, so that Conrad would reign after him if he should happen to die without a son. For at that time the glorious king don A[lfonso] did not have a son, but only daughters.⁴⁶

It is significant that Juan of Osma chose to describe Conrad's knighting before anything else, and that in doing so he identified Conrad as the son of the Holy Roman Emperor. Marriage to an emperor's son would bring Berenguela, and through her the royal house of Castile, great prestige. But the prestige with which the chronicler was most concerned was that provided by the ceremony of knighting.

By custom, the kings of Castile and León were formally knighted. While this did not necessarily take place before their accession, it was normally done before they married.⁴⁷ Alfonso VIII took the opportunity to knight Conrad

himself as a means of elevating his own status and, perhaps, of binding Conrad more firmly to the promises he had made in the marriage treaty.

The creation of a knight was a ritual designed to reinforce explicitly the social norms of lordship. A new knight received his sword from his lord, who then buckled the sword, in its sword belt, around the new knight's waist. In receiving the sword, the knight accepted a status subordinate to the lord who gave it; the *Siete Partidas*, the law code composed under Berenguela's grandson Alfonso X, explains that new knights "are bound to obey and honor those who give them the order of knighthood" by buckling their swords.⁴⁸ This subordination was not vassalage per se; that required a separate ritual. But it was an acceptance of personal obligation to, and a recognition of the lordly superiority of, the man who performed the knighting. For kings—particularly Castilian and Leonese kings—this made the ritual passage to knighthood a fraught moment. Although it was generally acceptable elsewhere in Western Europe for a king (or future king) to receive knighthood from another king, the monarchs of Castile and León saw that act as a token of submission.⁴⁹

The cultural significance of Conrad's knighting is evident in the Castilian chancery's ecstatic commemoration of the event. The dating formulas of royal diplomas could be used to mark important achievements—the birth of Infante Sancho in 1181, for example, or a major military victory.⁵⁰ After the Curia of Carrión, they commemorated Conrad's knighting, with particular attention to the fact that Alfonso VIII had buckled his sword belt: "in the year and during the days in which the aforesaid A[lfonso], illustrious king of Castile and Toledo, girded the son of the Roman emperor, Conrad by name, as a new knight, and gave him his daughter Berenguela in marriage."⁵¹ The DRH uses almost identical language: "in that curia the king of Castile, the noble Alfonso, likewise girded Conrad, son of Frederick, the Roman emperor, with the sword belt of a knight, and betrothed him to his firstborn daughter, Berenguela."⁵² Clearly, the two most important things about this knighting, from the Castilian point of view, were that Conrad was an emperor's son and that Alfonso VIII had buckled his sword belt.

Lordship over the Holy Roman Emperor's son considerably raised Alfonso VIII's standing in the hierarchy of European powers. But it had a more practical purpose too. In the late twelfth century, when pacts and treaties elsewhere in Europe were becoming increasingly formalized, agreements in Iberia were still founded on affective bonds—primarily those of kinship and vassalage.⁵³ Monarchs promised to keep peace with each other by loving each

other as brothers, or as father and son, while the nobles who served as guarantors of their treaties avowed their good faith by doing homage to all the monarchs involved.⁵⁴ These intensely personal connections were thought to ensure fidelity more securely than mere words on parchment could. By creating a tie of lordship between himself and Conrad, Alfonso VIII hoped to safeguard against the chance that Conrad would break his oaths and abuse the rights accorded him by his marriage to Berenguela.

Although they delight in the expression of Alfonso VIII's lordship, the chroniclers are rather vague about the lordship of his prospective heirs. The CLRC is the most specific, recording that Alfonso VIII "caused homage to be done to [someone] by the whole kingdom, so that Conrad would reign after him" (*fecit sibi fieri omagium de toto regno ut idem Conradus regnaret post eum*).⁵⁵ *Sibi* can mean *himself*, *him*, *her*, or *them*. Since the clause immediately preceding this describes Conrad's betrothal to Berenguela, any one of these interpretations is possible. The Treaty of Seligenstadt required the kingdom to pledge fealty to both Berenguela and Conrad, so it is tempting to read *sibi* as *them*. But the sentence goes on to speak of only Conrad reigning after Alfonso VIII's death, with no mention of Berenguela. Juan of Osma was clearly not concerned with supporting Conrad's claim to the Castilian throne; is his language the product of a reflexive assumption that a woman could or should not actually "reign," even if the hereditary right to the kingdom was hers? This conclusion is tempting, yet the CLRC later asserts that Alfonso VIII had declared Berenguela his heir at the Curia of Carrión. The DRH concurs, claiming that "the whole kingdom" had twice done homage and sworn to recognize Berenguela as heir "before the king had had a son"—that is, presumably, between 1181 and 1189, when Berenguela's brother Fernando was born. Both chronicles also cite a diploma to this effect in the cathedral archive at Burgos, which is almost certainly the Treaty of Seligenstadt itself.⁵⁶ Alfonso VIII's wishes, and "the whole kingdom's" ratification of them at Carrión, are important points for both authors, so it is curious that Berenguela's reception as heir merits so little attention in their reports of the curia, even though they both wrote with the luxury of hindsight. And, although the chronicles treat this homage as a routine matter, it is in fact the first evidence of homage being done to a prospective Leonese or Castilian heir by representatives of the kingdom at large. By the 1230s, when the chronicles were written, the practice *had* become routine; but the Curia of Carrión was within both authors' memory.⁵⁷

This ceremony of homage and fealty was meant to shape the plural monarchy for the next generation. Aware that their daughter and her German

husband were problematic heirs, Alfonso VIII and Leonor demanded that the various constituent parts of their kingdom acknowledge the couple's authority in a ritual, mutually observable performance. In the late twelfth century in Castile and León, homage did more than create a personal bond of service and fidelity between vassal and lord. It could also guarantee a pledge⁵⁸—in this case, a pledge that those assembled would recognize Berenguela and Conrad as their monarchs when the time came. Castile's rulers knew that hereditary right was not enough to ensure succession in the face of widespread resistance. So they sought to forestall such resistance by creating, and publicly demonstrating, an affective solidarity among their elites in support of Berenguela's, and Conrad's, right to rule.⁵⁹

Berenguela's nearest potential rival for the throne, Alfonso IX of León, had already come to Carrión by the time of her betrothal; he had probably already left again, too.⁶⁰ Like Conrad, though, he came to seal an alliance with Alfonso VIII. Like Conrad, he intended to do this by marrying one of Alfonso VIII's daughters. And like Conrad, he found that the accomplishment of his goals required a knighting:

It was therefore arranged and established that one of the daughters of the king of Castile should be betrothed to Alfonso, king of León. . . . It was further established and agreed that the king of León should be knighted by the king of Castile and should then kiss his hand, which was also done. At the time that a famous and noble curia was celebrated at Carrión, the king of León was girded with a sword by the king of Castile in the church of San Zoil, and kissed the hand of the king of Castile, in the presence of Galicians and Leonese and Castilians.⁶¹

By the summer of 1188 Alfonso VIII had two daughters besides Berenguela: Urraca, who had been born in 1186, and Blanca (better known as Blanche), born earlier in 1188. Despite her youth and the fifteen-year gap in their ages, it was almost certainly Urraca who was proposed as Alfonso IX's bride. But in addition to the guarantees provided by the marriage, Alfonso VIII insisted not only on knighting Alfonso IX, but also on having him kiss his hand.

The act of receiving a sword and sword belt from the hand of Alfonso VIII carried all the connotations of lordship and obligation for Alfonso IX that it did for Conrad—more, perhaps, because Alfonso IX understood and shared the cultural valences that the Castilian court attached to that act. Still,

Alfonso IX was compelled to an even further display of subservience than Conrad had been. In Castile and León a kiss on the hand, the *besamanos*, was the ritual act of vassalage, a “formula of humble recognition of the hierarchical superiority of the person who received it.”⁶² So that kiss looms as large as or larger than the girding of the sword in the accounts of the chroniclers, and they are anxious to establish that it was done in the sight of many witnesses; the DRH reports that it happened “in front of the whole curia,” *in plena curia*,⁶³ while the CLRC emphasizes that not only Castilians but also Leonese and Galicians observed it. In that act, Alfonso IX subordinated not only himself to Alfonso VIII, but the kingdom of León to that of Castile. He also compromised his own kingship by accepting another king’s dominance. Even the sword-girding was more troublesome for him than for Conrad, because he was Alfonso VIII’s titular equal while Conrad was only a duke; but the *besamanos* exacerbated the problem irretrievably. We can, again, read Alfonso VIII’s triumph not only in the Castilian chronicles but also in his own diplomas: “in the year when the most serene King A[lfonso] of Castile girded A[lfonso], king of León, with the sword of a knight, and A[lfonso], king of León, willingly kissed the hand of the said Alfonso, king of Castile and Toledo.”⁶⁴

Alfonso IX accepted both his humiliation and his bride for the sake of peace. Infanta Urraca returned with him to León in the care of a Castilian noble, Pedro García de Lerma. In addition to acting as “guardian of the king’s betrothed,” Pedro García also became Alfonso IX’s majordomo—an arrangement that was doubtless part of the deal between the kings.⁶⁵

But Alfonso IX was plagued by the memory of Carrión, especially as he grew more secure in León. By early 1189, his resentment toward Alfonso VIII soured relations between the two kingdoms. Pedro García de Lerma disappeared from the Leonese court and was replaced as majordomo.⁶⁶ At about the same time, Urraca rejoined her family in Castile.⁶⁷ The Leonese marriage was plainly off. Alfonso IX would soon turn his back on Castile altogether and begin courting Portugal instead. The embarrassment his act had caused both him and his kingdom is partly visible in the fact that the Leonese chronicler Lucas of Tuy, though he was writing for Berenguela, makes no mention of the Curia of Carrión at all. It is even more obvious in the fact that Alfonso IX re-knighted himself several years later at the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. This time, he did it in the only way proper for a king: he buckled the sword belt himself.⁶⁸

Berenguela’s betrothal to Conrad fared little better than the alliance with León. The emperor’s son went home after Carrión, but his meeting with his

prospective bride had perhaps failed to enchant her: "But when Conrad had returned to Germany, the maiden immediately objected to the betrothal."⁶⁹ Archbishop Rodrigo says that Berenguela's refusal was insistent enough to cause the betrothal to be annulled—which was necessary in any case since she and Conrad were too closely related.⁷⁰ Interestingly, the PCG, which usually hews closely to Archbishop Rodrigo's account, diverges here in order to assert exactly the reverse: that Conrad's rebellion against the marriage led to its termination. "But having returned to Germany, don Conrad objected to that betrothal," so the archbishop of Toledo and a papal representative annulled it, "and in this way the maiden doña Berenguela remained unmarried."⁷¹ The change in agents suggests, first, an effort to exculpate Berenguela from the unmaidenly act of rebelling against her parents, and second, a pressing desire to establish that the brief betrothal had been rendered canonically invalid. Otherwise, Berenguela's later marriage would have been even more legally suspect than it already was.⁷²

But it was not the young couple's distaste that undid the marriage alliance, or not only that. In November 1189, Leonor finally bore another son, Fernando. His survival made Berenguela neither heir to Castile nor an appealing match for Conrad. The annulment reflected her loss of consequence, and cost Castile its much-heralded alliance with the imperial bloodline.⁷³

Even after the Curia of Carrión, Alfonso VIII had not consistently had Berenguela co-issue his diplomas. She began to appear regularly in that capacity only in spring 1189.⁷⁴ This recognition solidified and formalized the status of heir-designate that had been accorded to her by her marriage treaty and, presumably, by homage at the Curia of Carrión. It also indicates that Alfonso VIII did indeed expect his subjects to accept her as his heir. Thereafter Berenguela co-issued consistently for a time, but her formal acknowledgement as heir was abruptly terminated, along with her formal status. Her brother Fernando was born on November 29, and co-issued his first diploma—without Berenguela—on December 2.⁷⁵ For the first time since 1181, Berenguela was an *infanta* and nothing more.

After Fernando's birth, Berenguela virtually disappears from the documentary record. We glimpse her in Burgos in 1190, co-issuing a diploma with her parents, Fernando, and her sisters Urraca and Blanche; she surfaces again in a similar context two years later. In 1197, she and her mother together witnessed a charter at Las Huelgas.⁷⁶ Otherwise, her life is a cipher, as are those of most royal women before they marry, and of many even after marriage. She probably remained at court on a more or less permanent basis after

1189. Even if she could no longer expect to rule as a queen-regnant, she still needed to learn how to succeed as a queen-consort, and there was no better teacher than her mother.

At court, Berenguela would have witnessed firsthand the tumultuous events of the 1190s. Animosity between Castile and León erupted into outright warfare, which ground on year by year without resolution. Even though a peace treaty was finally sealed at Tordehumos in 1194, it was quickly made worthless by what the Castilians saw as grave treachery. In 1195 Alfonso VIII prepared a great campaign against the Almohads, and Alfonso IX promised to join him. But whether because Alfonso VIII had chosen to go ahead alone (as the DRH says), or because Alfonso IX was plotting a betrayal (as the CLRC says), the Leonese army did not arrive in time to fight alongside the Castilians at the decisive battle of Alarcos. There, Alfonso VIII suffered a devastating defeat in which he lost several of his nobles and prelates and was nearly killed himself.⁷⁷ Alfonso IX's failure to appear made him an easy scapegoat. The CLRC claims that Alfonso IX had deliberately abandoned his cousin because "he kept in the back of his mind what had happened to him in the curia . . . that was celebrated in Carrión."⁷⁸ The Castilian-Leonese conflict thus hung over much of Berenguela's adolescence.

The crown of Castile was no longer Berenguela's intended fate. But a childhood spent as its heir had afforded her training and opportunities that were seldom available to royal women. These may have prepared her better for the various kinds of authority she would hold as an adult. At the very least, they make her childhood more accessible to view. The picture is by no means complete, but there are fewer pieces missing for Berenguela than for many other royal women.

Her case can hardly be considered typical. Still, the fact that her years as heir did not adhere to the pattern customary for male heirs—for example, that she did not consistently co-issue diplomas—indicates the gendered nature of contemporary perceptions of inheritance. There are no signs of crisis in Castile during the 1180s, as there are in León forty years later when Alfonso IX tried to designate his daughters as heirs; but the difference may be due to the fact that unlike Alfonso IX in the 1220s, Alfonso VIII in the 1180s was still young, married, and likely to produce a son. In designating Berenguela his heir, he therefore tried to walk a line between giving her enough legitimacy to succeed and keeping her somewhat out of his subjects' sight so as not to provoke their anxiety. Berenguela began co-issuing diplomas consistently only in the spring of 1189, when not only was she safely betrothed but

Queen Leonor was pregnant again. Berenguela's visibility as heir was made less threatening by her mother's obvious fecundity.

All of the problems that faced Berenguela and her parents while she was their heir in childhood, and which received so much attention in her 1188 marriage treaty, would prove just as pressing when Berenguela inherited Castile as an adult. At the same time, she would benefit not only from her own experience, but also from her parents' careful training. The extent and quality of that training became evident when another marriage was arranged for Berenguela in 1197. It asked her to do as a teenager what neither her father nor her younger sister Urraca had been able to do in 1188—create a lasting peace between León and Castile.

Chapter 2

Queen of León, 1197–1204

In some sense, Berenguela's marriage to the king of León was the fulfillment of her destiny. A royal woman's primary function—her only function, in the view of some contemporaries—was to be married off, thus securing an alliance for her father and offering her new husband a chance to generate legitimate heirs. For a long time, modern historians followed their medieval counterparts in viewing queens and princesses chiefly as marital pawns, whose natal families took little interest in them once an advantageous marriage had been concluded. After marriage, a woman's interests were expected to align with those of her new kinsmen and especially with those of her children, so her connections to her natal family quickly faded—as did their connections to her.¹

More recent scholarship has pointed out the flaw in this theory. Alliance marriages gave kings an agent in their new ally's court—one whose personal influence over her new husband could do much to advance their cause. The wisest course was for monarchs to stay in close touch with their married daughters, whose sympathies for both their natal and marital families made them ideal mediators between the two. In this way, marriage alliances could thrive long after the wedding was over.²

If a relationship with married daughters was considered valuable in other Western European kingdoms, such as England and France, then it was surely even more cherished in the kingdoms of Iberia, where cognatic kinship endured longer.³ And if such relationships existed, then we must ascribe much more agency and authority to royal wives and daughters than earlier theorists did. Queens did, in fact, wield power that went well beyond the bedroom, well beyond the prestige of birthing an heir to the kingdom or the persuasive powers of pillow talk. Berenguela's marriage to Alfonso IX is a case in point.

Although she ruled as queen of León for only seven years, she exercised broad powers in the kingdom during that time, both independently and jointly with her husband. To some extent, her independent lordship in León was the birthright of Iberian queens—as a rule, they enjoyed more status and authority than their northern counterparts.⁴ But the terms of Berenguela's marriage, and comparison of her role in León with that of other queens of her day, show that her reign was unusual even in a culture of relatively powerful queens.

Part of this was due to Berenguela herself. She was only about seventeen when she married Alfonso IX, who was nine years older; but in her world a seventeen-year-old girl was an adult, ready to take on all the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood. And Berenguela had been groomed all her life not only as the valuable agent of a future alliance, but also as Castile's potential heir.⁵ Even at seventeen she was able to put her training to use, for throughout her reign in León she insisted on and secured rights not only to the properties that were hers by marriage, but to many other possessions and privileges as well.

Of course, Berenguela had the weight of her father's kingdom behind her. The terms of her marriage agreement made her the agent and symbol of a tenuous peace between León and Castile, and she actively mediated between her husband and her father both during and after her marriage. Alfonso IX was in many senses the junior partner in the Leonese-Castilian alliance, and was reluctant to jeopardize his good relationship with his father-in-law—although some of the prerogatives Berenguela enjoyed in León were, as we will see, only vaguely related to any desire to keep peace on the border. More importantly, Berenguela entered her marriage as the *domina* of a strategically vital border area, whose significance was out of all proportion to its size. She was therefore a force to be reckoned with, both within and outside the marriage.

In some respects, then, Berenguela's marriage was unusual. In others, it was very like the matches made by other medieval queens. It is possible to observe Berenguela acting, as queen-consort, in many of the roles often posited for royal women. She was a working partner to her husband; she was a source of patronage to nobles from both Castile and León; she was a mother; and she was an intermediary between her natal and marital families. Supported by the monarchs of both Castile and León, she reigned as queen while also establishing her independent power—power that would prove crucial for her future career.

The Tierra de Campos

In the years just prior to 1197, Castile had had the upper hand in its long-standing border war with León. In fact, it had taken the offensive, as Alfonso VIII pushed his interpretation of the “border” farther and farther west. By the 1190s he had seized towns well beyond the disputed territory, in the Leonese heartland itself. Alfonso IX fought back, but his was mainly a defensive war. León gained no ground in the Tierra de Campos, and was hard pressed to keep what it had.⁶

The effect of this ongoing conflict on the land and people of the Tierra de Campos can easily be imagined. After the onset of hostilities in 1159, the residents of the region drew together into concentrated settlements that could be more readily defended. At the same time, the monarchs of both Castile and León granted generous *fueros*, or charters of privileges, to the towns of the region, with the aim of encouraging settlement there. A spree of castle-building turned both large and smaller towns into defensive outposts, ready to resist incursions from the neighboring kingdom.⁷

But the Tierra de Campos was not only a military zone. Even as hostilities swelled between Castile and León, the region’s economy was rapidly growing, thanks to increasing agricultural production. Its towns, which had already enjoyed considerable economic importance, became even richer; new markets sprang up everywhere, each promising a potential fortune in tolls and levies to the lord who controlled it. And the population boomed as well; in the century between 1155 and 1255, the Tierra de Campos was the most heavily populated region in Castile,⁸ its residents lured both by economic opportunity and by the settlement incentives spelled out in the towns’ *fueros*. All this made the Tierra de Campos an even more attractive prize to its warring kings, but it also drew the eye of other regional powers—nobles, monasteries, bishops, and the councils of the growing towns themselves.⁹ Beneath the pageantry of royal armies on the march, behind the grand sweep of royal treaties and alliances, lay a complex network of lords and powers, each seeking to advance itself at the others’ expense.

With such a confluence of economic, military, and strategic value, it is no surprise that the Tierra de Campos looms large in the history of this period. When contemporary chronicles—especially the DRH and the CLRC—discuss the first few decades of the thirteenth century, most of the events they describe take place either within the Tierra de Campos or just outside it.¹⁰ This is the region that defined León and Castile at the turn of

the thirteenth century, the region that transformed Berenguela from an infant into a queen.

“A Peace That Could Not Have Been Restored Except by Marriage”

In 1196, Alfonso IX and his ally, Sancho VII of Navarre, attacked Castile while Alfonso VIII was still reeling from his crushing defeat by the Almohads at Alarcos the year before. Alfonso IX invaded the Castilian Tierra de Campos “as far as Carrión, where he thought to cleanse himself of the disgrace that he believed had been inflicted on him when he kissed the king of Castile’s hand” at the curia held there in 1188.¹¹ But as soon as Alfonso VIII had his feet under him again, he launched a fierce campaign of reprisal into the Leonese Tierra de Campos. In this assault, and in a second the following year, he seized important castles and devastated a wide swath of Alfonso IX’s western and southern lands.¹²

These two campaigns cost Alfonso IX a great deal of territory, both within the disputed area of the Tierra de Campos and in regions that were unmistakably Leonese, and he seems to have been unable either to defend his borders or to push the Castilians back across theirs. Worse, he learned after the onslaught of 1197 that Alfonso VIII was preparing a third invasion. As Lucas of Tuy remarked, “The two most warlike kings, like two most warlike lions, did not know how to yield to each other.”¹³ Fortunately, some worthy individuals suggested an alternative—a marriage between Alfonso IX and his rival’s oldest daughter, Berenguela.¹⁴

The logic, from the Leonese point of view, was simple. Alfonso IX could not recover his lost castles by force. But the king of Castile could perhaps be persuaded to settle the disputed territories on his daughter as her marriage portion. If so, they would eventually pass back to the crown of León, since they would be inherited by Berenguela’s—and Alfonso IX’s—children when she died.

This arrangement was not immediately well received in Castile. Archbishop Rodrigo says that “the noble king [Alfonso VIII] was reluctant to do this, because he and the king of León were related by blood”—that is, they were first cousins, which meant that Alfonso IX and Berenguela were related within the degrees of consanguinity prohibited by canon law.¹⁵ However,

Archbishop Rodrigo's concern sounds like after-the-fact editorializing. Although the Church did reject this marriage, Alfonso VIII's initial scruples were more likely strategic than religious—he had just won several important castles from an enemy who could not recapture them, and he felt little inclination to hand his winnings back. But another power intervened:

Queen Leonor, wife of the noble Alfonso, who was most wise [*prudētissima*], perceived with clear and expert foresight the dangers of the situation, which could be resolved by a marriage of this kind. And she gave her daughter in marriage to the king of León, who had come to Valladolid accompanied by his magnates.¹⁶

Leonor's active role in arranging her daughter's marriage shows the influence medieval queens could exert in the crucial business of marital alliance.¹⁷ Archbishop Rodrigo's approving description, meanwhile, suggests that the open participation of Iberian queens in royal marriage negotiations was acceptable and even praiseworthy. In fact, Rodrigo goes farther by suggesting that the queen's judgment was superior to the king's in this case, and thus that the real work of marriage negotiation was more properly hers than his. We will see this pattern repeated elsewhere, most notably in Berenguela's negotiations for the marriages of her own children and of her younger sister Leonor. But the fact that marriage arrangements were among the recognized responsibilities of queens in general—not merely of a powerful few such as Berenguela and her mother—is evident from the example of both queens and noblewomen in France and England. Eleanor of Aquitaine, Adela of Blois, and Matilda of Boulogne are only a few of the women known to have participated in, and sometimes led, marriage negotiations for their sons and daughters.¹⁸

Leonor saw that Berenguela's marriage to Alfonso IX could quiet a border war that, although successful, had drained Alfonso VIII's resources and reduced his ability to resist the Almohads' ongoing incursions into southern Castile.¹⁹ She convinced her husband to come to terms with Alfonso IX—or, as Archbishop Rodrigo implies, she came to terms with him herself.²⁰ But the sources are nearly silent about what those terms were. Archbishop Rodrigo says that Berenguela received “wedding gifts” from her family (*propter nuptias . . . donationes*) without specifying what they were. He also reports that Alfonso VIII gave Berenguela “everything that he had taken from his former enemy, now his son-in-law.”²¹ But the only firm information we have

about the terms of Berenguela's marriage comes from a treaty made two years later, in 1199. This document refers in passing to five castles that Alfonso VIII had given Berenguela, but the castles are not identified.²² I will discuss the terms of the 1199 diploma in detail below.

The Castilian monarchs also overcame any religious qualms that they might have entertained. Even though Alfonso IX and Berenguela were too closely related for their marriage to be legitimate in the eyes of the Church, the pope could be asked to grant them a marriage dispensation, which would obviate the problem. However, applying for the dispensation would mean delays, and there was no guarantee that it would be granted—Rome had become very hostile toward consanguineous marriages. And once the dispensation was refused, the marriage could never go through. Meanwhile, the opportunity for peace between Castile and León was too fragile to last long. According to the PCG, when confronted by Alfonso VIII's reluctance to contend with canon law, the Leonese and Castilian magnates took a very practical view of the situation to Leonor:

and they went and talked to her in secret . . . telling her that among monarchs, when so much good could come from that marriage and so much evil could be avoided, it was more a blessing than a sin; besides, once it was done, they would all give alms and do penance and fast so that it would be pardoned; and even besides that, this marriage could last long enough for the couple to produce some heirs, and after that either the pope would allow the marriage, or they could eventually be separated by law; and meanwhile the time would pass and the people would live in peace and happiness.²³

Leonor, says the PCG, was persuaded, and soon talked her husband into the idea.

In this matter, as in so many others, the bishops of Castile and León sided with their rulers rather than with Rome.²⁴ So Alfonso IX and Berenguela were married toward the end of 1197,²⁵ in the Castilian border town of Valladolid—a town that was to have close connections to Berenguela for the rest of her life. Berenguela came to León as a queen, “and peace was restored between the kings of León and Castile, which could not have been done in any other way than by the king of Castile uniting his daughter doña Berenguela to the king of León in marriage.”²⁶

That marriage had been carefully planned, and Alfonso VIII had jealously guarded Berenguela's prerogatives—as we will see in a moment. However, despite his disadvantaged bargaining position, Alfonso IX had managed to defend his interests too. As I mentioned before, the only surviving document that describes Berenguela's arras is the 1199 treaty, made two years after the marriage. But the terms of the 1199 arras were at least partly in force before the treaty itself was made. On September 15, 1199, Gonzalo Núñez de Lara confirmed one of Alfonso IX's diplomas as “holding the queen's arras in Asturias” (*tenente arras regine de Asturiis*). The arras treaty of December 8 does indeed grant Berenguela properties in Asturias, though it assigns their tenancies to Fernando Núñez de Lara, Gonzalo's older brother, among other men.²⁷ The fact that Berenguela already held some properties named in the arras treaty indicates that the treaty did not radically alter the conditions established in 1197.

According to the treaty, Berenguela held thirty castles in various regions of the kingdom. Thirteen were located in the Asturian heartland, close to the city of Oviedo, and including Oviedo itself. Five were in Galicia. But the others lay in hotly contested regions along the Leonese-Castilian border. Four of them were in Somoza, a region just north of the Tierra de Campos that had also been the subject of territorial disputes;²⁸ the other nine were in the Tierra de Campos itself.²⁹ Lucas of Tuy adds that Berenguela received another Tierra de Campos property not named in the treaty: the fortifications, or “towers,” of León.³⁰ If so, her presence in that region became formidable indeed.

The primary aim of Berenguela's arras, then, was to resolve the conflicts over the Leonese-Castilian border.³¹ The five castles in Galicia—well away from the border—were of little interest to Alfonso VIII. In fact, Alfonso IX gave his father-in-law the option of trading them for another five castles of Castile's choosing. He was careful, however, to limit Alfonso VIII's options: the king of Castile could not ask for any castles belonging to the Church or to the military orders. Nor could he trade Berenguela's Galician castles for any of sixteen royal towns, whose value to León was due in no small part to the fact that they all lay along its contested southern frontier—the Tierra de Campos, Leonese Extremadura, and the Leonese Transierra.³²

The treaty outlined the scope of Berenguela's lordship within her arras properties. The inhabitants of each of her castles and of the towns associated with them were to do homage to the knight who held that castle as Berenguela's tenant, “for [the inhabitants] are to be faithful vassals of Queen doña Berenguela, and shall carry out all her orders in peace.” The knights-tenant, in turn, would also be Berenguela's vassals, though they simultaneously owed

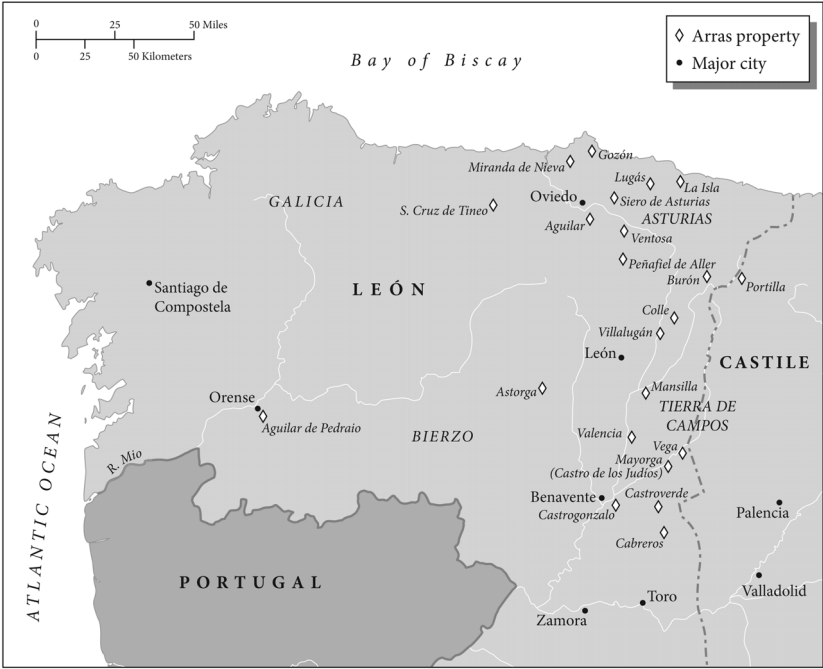


Figure 3. Berenguela's arras possessions, 1199.

service to Alfonso IX as king of León. In taking up their tenancies, they did homage to the kings of both León and Castile as well as to Berenguela herself: “And we, the vassals [*fideles*] who hold this arras, therefore do homage to those kings and to Queen doña Berenguela, the wife of the king of León, such that we will faithfully fulfill and cause to be fulfilled all that is contained in the present charter.” The consent of all three monarchs was required to change a castle’s tenant, or to replace a tenant who had died.³³ These measures positioned Berenguela as a lord in her own right, subordinate to the kings of Castile and León, but able to exercise authority over the noble tenants of her arras so long as her demands of them did not trespass on their fidelity to their, and her, kingly overlords. Her agency in the management of her strategically vital arras properties was shared with her husband and father, but not circumscribed by them. And the arras tenants who had now formally become her vassals were men of considerable standing in both kingdoms; their subordination to her established Berenguela not only as a lord, but as a great lord, within the kingdom of León.

However, the conditions of Berenguela’s lordship made it substantially different from that of the kingdom’s magnates. This is evident in the arras treaty’s careful provisions for the disposal of her castles should the marriage end. These provisions were listed among the clauses that set out punishments for any king who seized the arras castles by force—a likely consequence of the marriage’s termination. Alfonso IX lost the arras—it would be released to Berenguela, and through her to the power of the king of Castile then reigning—if he dismissed Berenguela, held her captive “contrary to reason,” killed her, or had her killed. If she died naturally, her arras would go to one of her surviving sons or daughters, or—in the absence of heirs—back to Alfonso IX. And if she outlived her husband, she would retain her arras freely until her death.³⁴ While such stipulations are not unusual,³⁵ they suggest the high stakes of the negotiations. Nearly half of Berenguela’s arras properties lay in Somoza and the Tierra de Campos, and had already been the object of violence between León and Castile; the treaty set stern prohibitions on any resumption of hostilities. But those prohibitions indicate how perilous Berenguela’s position as *domina* of the contested castles might be. The castles themselves risked attack from her father or husband at any change in the political weather; Berenguela’s family apparently feared that her own safety might be compromised too. And even in the absence of open conflict during her lifetime, her arras was likely to be a subject of dispute after her, or her husband’s, death—hence the need to spell out the line of inheritance.

Nevertheless, the very tension that underlies the arras treaty reveals the value of the castles now bestowed on Berenguela. She could, certainly, remain a passive witness to the tenuous accord that had been brokered through her hand and body. But she could also parlay her presence on the Leonese-Castilian border into real power, by insisting that her lordship there be more than merely nominal. She took the latter course.

“His Castilian Wife”

Early in Berenguela’s marriage, one Gil González dated his donation to the Order of Santiago by the reign of “King Alfonso . . . and his Castilian wife Queen Berenguela.”³⁶ The adjective hints at resentment, or at least keen awareness, of a queen who hailed from a foreign kingdom notably hostile to Leonese interests.³⁷ It was a fair description nonetheless. Berenguela’s ideas of queenship had been molded in the Castilian tradition, and she brought a distinctly Castilian flavor into her husband’s court.

The role Berenguela expected to play in León was modeled on her mother’s example. Leonor had been queen of Castile since she was ten years old, and enjoyed significant arras properties of her own. These included major strongholds in the Tierra de Campos, such as Saldaña, Carrión, Aguilar de Campóo, Dueñas, and the fortress of Cabezón near Valladolid; they also included the city of Burgos, Castile’s historic capital, along with half of any territories that Alfonso VIII had won from the Almohads since the day of their marriage.³⁸ In addition to the resources and authority guaranteed her by these possessions, Leonor shared actively in her husband’s rule of the kingdom. Her first surviving appearance in Alfonso VIII’s diplomas comes on September 17, 1170, shortly after their marriage;³⁹ thereafter she is named so regularly in the intitution of royal diplomas that her few absences come as something of a surprise. Between 1180 and 1190, for example, Leonor is absent from only 22 of the 173 surviving royal diplomas: that is, she co-issued 87 percent of them,⁴⁰ during a decade when the births of six children surely offered some hindrance to her participation at court. She had her own major-domo, a queenly equivalent of the most important officer in the king’s household; the first man known to hold the position was Martín González de Contreras, who was succeeded in the queen’s service by his sons García and Rodrigo. She also had her own merinos,⁴¹ as well as tenants who held her arras properties and owed service directly to her.⁴² Yet although Berenguela’s

activity as queen reflected her mother's in some respects, she went beyond the precedent set by Leonor.

Like her mother, Berenguela was a constant presence in her husband's diplomas. The frequency with which her name appears makes it difficult to overlook Berenguela's unusual position in Leonese affairs. But what did her influence really accomplish? I will consider three areas in which Berenguela's activity had observable results: relations with Castile, the internal rule of the kingdom, and royal patronage of the nobility.

Ties That Bind

I have mentioned already that the principle of marriage negotiations—that a bride could help to secure an alliance—would have accomplished little if the woman involved lost contact with her natal family. For Berenguela, such contact was imperative. Her marriage made her the mediator of the fragile peace between León and Castile; the location of so many of her arras properties along the kingdoms' shared border gave a concrete reality to the role. Since the years of Berenguela's marriage were marked by a singular lack of conflict between her natal and adopted kingdoms, we can surmise that she was successful at whatever part she played in keeping harmony. But her diplomatic tasks could only have suffered if she had to carry them out in isolation from her parents and her brother, the presumptive Castilian heir.

Berenguela was more fortunate than many queens in having married very close to home, so that it was not difficult to arrange a border rendezvous between the Leonese and Castilian courts. Such meetings occurred several times during her marriage, which lends weight to the theory that married queens stayed closely connected to their families of origin; if Berenguela maintained such contacts, other queens whose activities are less well documented probably did the same.

The first documented visit that Berenguela and Alfonso IX paid to the court of Castile came in late April or early May of 1198. Two separate surviving charters record that during this period, don Fernando Pérez made a donation to the military Order of Santiago. The second of the charters, made on May 7, 1198, and confirmed by important Leonese figures including the archbishop of Compostela and the bishop of Astorga, is dated this way: "In the reign of the lord king Alfonso, with his wife Queen doña Berenguela, in León, Galicia, and Asturias, while the king of León and the king of Castile,

along with the queens their wives, were staying in Palencia.”⁴³ Berenguela was at least two months along in her first pregnancy in April or May of 1198.⁴⁴ Was the visit prompted in part by parental solicitude?⁴⁵

Berenguela apparently saw her family rather often during this first year of her marriage. The meeting of the two courts in Palencia is the first instance. A few months later, in August, Berenguela and Alfonso IX issued a diploma from Valladolid. Although this document makes no suggestion that the Castilian court was also present,⁴⁶ there is little other reason for the Leonese monarchs to have visited a Castilian border town.

Finally, in January 1199, Berenguela joined her family in Burgos—perhaps without her husband. Alfonso VIII issued a diploma on January 10 in which he acted with Leonor, “with my son Fernando and with my daughters, that is, Queen doña Berenguela, and the infantas doña Urraca, doña Blanca, doña Constanza, and doña Sancha.”⁴⁷ Had Alfonso IX also been present, he would probably have merited mention in a diploma that recognized even the Castilian infantas, normally absent from royal acts. If Berenguela did come to Burgos alone, then whatever her reasons were for visiting her family, they did not always require her husband’s participation.

Berenguela’s visits were certainly concerned, at least in part, with formulating a joint response to Rome’s attacks on her marriage; the prelates of León and Castile did negotiate with and for each other in the papal court.⁴⁸ But if the Leonese monarchs’ visits to Castile were strictly for the sake of business, then why was Berenguela included? If her only purpose in attending these meetings was social, if they were simply an opportunity for reunion with her parents and siblings, then they demonstrate a close and enduring tie between a queen and her natal family. If she also participated in the debates that would decide the future of her marriage, then the meetings are further evidence that she actively helped to shape the Castilian-Leonese alliance. This is hardly surprising, for the young queen of León had already taken an active part in ruling her new kingdom.

Regina et Domina

From her first appearance in December 1197 until her presumed departure from León in April 1204,⁴⁹ Berenguela co-issued 55 of Alfonso IX’s 69 extant diplomas—that is, she and Alfonso IX jointly granted 80 percent of all the crown’s recorded acts.⁵⁰ In addition to signaling her regular attendance at

court, Berenguela's inclusion in the intitulations and corroborations of Alfonso IX's diplomas formalized her place in the plural monarchy. Her power was recognized and sanctioned not only by her husband, but also by the prelates and nobles who confirmed royal documents. Even if that power derived only from her union with her husband, and was therefore still more his than hers, it was real nonetheless—a publicly stated, publicly honored authority.

I have been using the term “co-issued” to refer to diplomas granted by the king “together with” (*una cum*) his wife or other family members. However, co-issued diplomas actually fall into two categories: those in which the act is ascribed only to the king through verbs in the first person singular (*ego . . . una cum uxore mea . . . do et concedo*), and those in which the act is ascribed to both the king and the co-issuer(s) through verbs in the first person plural (*ego . . . una cum uxore mea . . . damus et concedimus*). This second type of co-issued diploma is rarer, but the syntactic difference is significant. It is best understood by comparison with what may be the most remarkable manifestation of Berenguela's queenly authority—her independent diplomas.

Berenguela issued eight surviving independent diplomas, directives made in her own name and on her own authority. They are all donations—to the military orders of Santiago and Salvatierra, to the cathedral of Astorga, and to the monasteries of San Isidoro de León, San Pedro de Eslonza, and Valdediós. Berenguela issued four of them in concert with her husband, and three entirely on her own.⁵¹

The first is, fittingly, the very first extant diploma in which Berenguela appears as queen of León. This is a co-issued diploma, but the secondary issuer is Alfonso IX; the document is quite clear about both the queen's authority for the act and her motivations for it: “I, Berenguela, by the grace of God queen of León and Galicia, with the approval and at the command of the lord king of León, my husband, and also for the sake of charity and mercy, and indeed for my own well-being and the salvation of my soul and those of my parents, make this charter.”⁵² Berenguela acted upon the “approval” and “command” of Alfonso IX, which suggests her subordinate status; but again, *subordinate* does not mean *insignificant*.⁵³ The verbs of this diploma are all in the first person singular (*facio, dono, concedo*), signifying that Berenguela's actions were entirely her own.

This diploma is a privilege to the Order of Santiago, granting it a tithe of all the *cilleros* in the kingdom. The *cillero* came from the revenues of the king's own agricultural exploitations,⁵⁴ so it is rather remarkable that

Berenguela should be the one to dispose of it. But Berenguela clearly had full title to these royal revenues: "For I give and concede to you in perpetuity the right to collect a tithe of all the *cilleros* of my kingdom . . . except for what the lord king my husband firmly granted to other Orders in his privileges."⁵⁵ That exception suggests just how extensive Berenguela's control over the *cilleros* was. Prior to her marriage, Alfonso IX had granted portions of the *cillero* to various ecclesiastical institutions across the kingdom, such as the cathedral of Zamora, in Leonese Extremadura, and the monastery of San Esteban de Nogales, in the Bierzo.⁵⁶ These were not regions in which Berenguela had significant arras properties or other interests. Yet the diploma had to specify that her grant did not override Alfonso IX's previous gifts; in other words, without this provision, the Order of Santiago might have considered itself to have a competing claim to the *cilleros* formerly awarded to Zamora and Nogales. This shows that Berenguela had the authority to dispose of *cillero* revenues throughout the kingdom, not merely within her own domains.

We can therefore take the newly married queen at her word when she speaks of León in this diploma as "my kingdom," *regnum meum*. That phrase reveals the kind of power she expected to exercise in León—not separate from the king's, certainly, but proprietary in its own right. In this she went beyond the example of her parents; Alfonso VIII's diplomas sometimes speak of "our kingdom," *regnum nostrum*,⁵⁷ but there is no surviving document in which Leonor refers to Castile as her own.

In her second diploma, issued just a few days later, Berenguela acted alone:

I, Berenguela, by the grace of God queen of León and Galicia, believing and knowing entirely that eternal life can be achieved through pious works, recognize, approve, and confirm to God and to the monastery of San Pedro de Eslonza the liberty, custom, and *fuero* that my great-grandfather of praiseworthy memory, Alfonso, emperor of the Spains, conceded and gave to the said monastery of San Pedro.⁵⁸

The confirmation of royal privileges made in previous generations was a frequent theme in the diplomas of Leonese and Castilian kings, but it is rare to see a queen doing this,⁵⁹ especially without the explicit approval of her husband. Confirmation diplomas served, among other things, as instruments

of royal legitimacy, highlighting the king's ties to prestigious predecessors. Berenguela's reference to Alfonso VII served a similar legitimizing purpose. Alfonso VII was the last common ancestor of the royal houses of León and Castile. Mentioning him was a subtle reminder that the "Castilian queen" came of the same stock as her Leonese spouse.

Besides confirming Alfonso VII's privilege, Berenguela took Eslonza under her protection: "In addition, through the present writing I make it known to all the people of my kingdom, present and future, that I received the said monastery of San Pedro . . . under my tutelage and protection beyond any doubt."⁶⁰ It was uncommon, though not unheard-of, for queens to offer their personal protection to a religious institution;⁶¹ this was also something usually done by kings. But Berenguela had a special relationship with San Pedro de Eslonza; it was the recipient of two of her surviving independent diplomas as queen of León.⁶² The monastery was in the Tierra de Campos; as part of the Infantazgo of León, it had belonged to Alfonso VII's sister, Infanta Sancha Raimúndez, during her thirty years of co-dominion with the king.⁶³ Berenguela's patronage of Eslonza implies that she was taking up Sancha's mantle as *domina* in the Tierra de Campos. The fact that she acted toward the monastery virtually as a reigning monarch, by confirming earlier royal grants and offering her personal protection, indicates that her lordship in the region was substantial indeed.

She had this sort of authority over the city of Astorga as well. Astorga was one of the properties granted to Berenguela in her arras diploma of 1199, but she evidently exercised lordship there within a few months of arriving in León. In March 1198, nearly two years before the surviving arras diploma was issued, Berenguela took the cathedral chapter of Astorga and all its possessions under her protection:

Let it be known to all, in a document that shall endure, that I, Berenguela, queen of León, with the concession of my husband King don Alfonso, for the good of my soul and those of my parents and at the prayerful insistence of don Lope, the bishop of Astorga, and the canons of that church, I receive under my care and defense your houses, beasts, hereditary properties, people, and everything that you have or shall have, both now and in the future. And I make this charter of concession and defense to all the canons of Astorga for the good of my soul and for the good service that is constantly offered to God in that church. . . . I, Queen Berenguela, concede

and confirm this document that I ordered to be made, with my own authorization.⁶⁴

The diploma was witnessed, according to the versions that survive, by several of the most important men at the court of León: Archbishop Pedro of Compostela, Bishop Lope of Astorga, Bishop Manrique of León, and Bishop Rodrigo of Lugo, as well as the king's majordomo Fernando García, Pedro Fernández de Benavides, Count Gómez González de Traba, and Count Fruela Ramírez. It also originally had a wax seal, which depicted the arms of the kingdom of León on one side and the figure of a queen on the other⁶⁵—a seal that could only be Berenguela's own. It was very rare for royal women to use their personal seals on documents issued jointly with their spouses; this declaration of authority was usually reserved for contexts in which they acted alone.⁶⁶ Berenguela's seal, the witness of court figures, and the secondary participation of Alfonso IX all indicate the queen's broad authority in her arras city.⁶⁷

Other diplomas that Berenguela issued—either with Alfonso IX as her secondary co-issuer, or as an active partner in plural-verb diplomas—follow a similar pattern. Any privilege granted to the monastery of Valdediós, which like Eslonza was a special object of Berenguela's patronage, required her active participation. Likewise, she took part in any privilege that drew upon her rents—including, after 1201, any grant taken from the *cilleros* of the kingdom, which suggests strongly that Alfonso IX had assigned the revenues of the *cilleros* to her. She did the same for any diploma that touched upon her personal property. This might be property that she had purchased, such as a group of houses in the city of Salamanca, or it might be part of her arras properties. For example, she and Alfonso IX jointly granted a *fuero* to her town of Castroverde, and exempted from royal tribute those vassals of the monastery of San Isidoro de León who resided in Mayorga.⁶⁸

Her independent authority should not be overstated. For example, there is at least one case in which Alfonso IX gave a privilege to the cathedral of Astorga without Berenguela's participation, and two more in which she simply co-issued his single-verb diplomas granting privileges to that church.⁶⁹ A still more curious case is her diploma of June 22, 1199, which exempts the heritable properties of the chapel of the Holy Trinity, in the monastery of San Isidoro de León, from royal tribute: "I liberate and excuse [these properties] from all *pecho* and *facendaria* and royal dues."⁷⁰ Alfonso IX co-issued this document (*uolente et precipiente uenerabili uiro meo domno Adefonso rege,*

“with the will and instruction of my venerable husband King don Alfonso”), but it rested on Berenguela’s authority: “*I liberate and excuse,*” “*I do this . . . at the insistence of don Martín,*” “*I instructed this to be made.*” The fine paid by anyone who infringed San Isidoro’s new rights would go to her. And the diploma itself was prepared by the queen’s own chancery, not the king’s.⁷¹ Nevertheless, on the same day and in the same place, Alfonso IX issued a diploma granting the same privilege in nearly the same language, but resting on his own authority. Berenguela appears with him in its corroboration, but nowhere else.⁷² Generally, when one monarch confirmed another’s privilege, the confirming diploma acknowledged the fact. The absence of any acknowledgment in this one invites speculation. Was Alfonso IX’s diploma intended as a confirmation of Berenguela’s? It was certainly common for kings to confirm privileges issued by queens. But in that case, why not say so?

Perhaps the diplomas are not, in fact, covering the same ground. We have already seen that Berenguela controlled certain royal rents, such as the *cilleros*, across the kingdom as a whole. Within her own lands, she would have received many additional rents that were designated for the crown.⁷³ Many of Berenguela’s properties lay close to those of San Isidoro, and she had interests within both the city of León and the monastery itself.⁷⁴ I suggest that her diploma applied to royal dues that were hers to collect, like the *cilleros* or levies from her own domains, while Alfonso IX’s diploma applied to royal income in the kingdom at large. By requesting two diplomas, San Isidoro ensured that its chapel’s exemption was fully recognized in both monarchs’ jurisdictions.

The documentary evidence of an active, authoritative queen is borne out by the narrative of Lucas of Tuy, the only chronicler who describes Berenguela’s reign in León. His account is preoccupied with the affairs of his own city of León and his own monastery, San Isidoro, but it outlines the kind of queenly activities that often go unrecorded in narrative sources:

When she first came to León, she persuaded her husband, King Alfonso, with gentle pleas, to reform the customs and *fueros* of the city and kingdom of León and relieve abuses. Queen Berenguela built a royal palace in León from stones and lime, next to the monastery of San Isidoro, and she similarly restored the towers of León, which the barbarian king Almazor [al-Mansur] had once destroyed, with lime and stones. This most serene queen desired to adorn the

monastery of blessed Isidoro and the other principal churches of the kingdom with gold, silver, precious stones, and silken vestments.⁷⁵

To say that Berenguela persuaded Alfonso IX to reform León's customs and *fueros* is meant to portray her as just and merciful, two favorite medieval tropes of queenship.⁷⁶ Similarly, her largesse to the churches of León is meant to showcase her piety, another characteristic of the good medieval queen. What it also showcases, less deliberately, is her wealth. Berenguela must have commanded considerable resources from her arras (and, as we will see, from her tenancies) to be able to shower gold, silver, gems, and silk upon several major churches in León. And, pious or not, her patronage of major churches was good policy; the bishops of those churches were the ones defending her marriage in the Roman curia.

Lucas's report that the queen built León's royal palace is also remarkable; construction of major buildings was usually the province of the king. Lucas himself glorifies Alfonso VIII for building a royal palace next to the monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos—that is, for doing exactly what Berenguela did in León.⁷⁷ Even more remarkable is the news that Berenguela restored the fortifications of León. If (as Lucas claims elsewhere) Alfonso IX had given the towers of León to Berenguela as arras, or as a tenancy, then restoring them might properly be her task. But the control and maintenance of one of the kingdom's most important fortifications had obvious military overtones. If Alfonso IX gave her any authority over the towers of León, as it seems he did,⁷⁸ then he had granted her a significant role in the defense of the kingdom.⁷⁹

We can learn this much, then, from Lucas's description. But do his claims find any echo in other sources—in charters, diplomas, or other documents not designed to please a royal audience? The actions of queens-consort are seldom reported in individual charters; documents that required royal sanction typically needed only the presence or approval of the king. When an individual charter does mention a queen's involvement, therefore, it suggests that she took a special interest or role in the act being recorded. A few such examples from León survive, offering a sketch of Berenguela's participation in the ordinary business of the realm.

An individual sometimes needed royal permission to resell property he or she had received from the crown. The charter that recorded the sale would then acknowledge the king's approval of the transaction. A queen-consort's permission was rarely sought, even if she had co-issued the diploma in which

the gift was originally made. But Berenguela granted such permissions jointly with Alfonso IX on some occasions. When one Martín de Buena Fé, who had purchased property from Alfonso IX, wanted to sell that property to the Order of Santiago in January 1200, he did so “by the concession of my lord King don Alfonso and his wife Queen doña Berenguela.”⁸⁰

Berenguela’s involvement here might be ascribed to the fact that the property Martín had purchased was in Salamanca, a city whose tenancy Berenguela then held.⁸¹ This would be significant in itself, implying that Berenguela’s authority as tenant of Salamanca extended into areas that were otherwise the sole province of the crown; the approval of tenants was not normally required for the transfer of royal properties within their cities. However, certain features of this charter suggest larger reasons for the queen’s interest.

The charter was confirmed by three bishops: Manrique of León, Juan of Oviedo, and Martín of Zamora. This is a significant group, but it does not include Pedro, the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, who almost invariably accompanied the royal court; it also omits Gonzalo, the bishop of Salamanca itself. Both these prelates had confirmed a royal diploma earlier that month⁸² and were frequently in attendance upon Alfonso IX. Their omission suggests that only certain members of the court were involved with this charter.

That suggestion is borne out by the short list of lay confirmers. Most are not court nobles, which is unremarkable in an individual charter. The first lay confirmer, however, is Pedro Fernández de Benavides, Berenguela’s majordomo. The last—though his position may be due to a copyist’s error, since he is the only layman to be listed after the three bishops—is Gonzalo Yáñez, possibly the same Gonzalo Yáñez who is named as a tenant of Berenguela’s castles in her 1199 arras treaty. In other words, the only court nobles to witness this charter were apparently men with close ties to Berenguela.⁸³ I suspect that the crown’s obligations in the sale of Martín de Buena Fé’s property were handled by Berenguela’s court, acting alongside but independently of the “main” Leonese court headed by Alfonso IX.⁸⁴ It was for this reason that Martín explicitly appealed to the queen’s approval of the sale as well as the king’s.

Another charter of the same date makes this interpretation more probable. In it, Gonzalo Pérez sold houses in the city of León to that city’s bishop. The charter, which was made in the city of León, was confirmed by the full contingent of court prelates. It was also confirmed by a list of secular court

figures,⁸⁵ but not the same list that usually confirmed Alfonso IX's diplomas. Three of the noble confirmers—Rodrigo Pérez de Villalobos, Pedro Fernández de Benavides, and Pelayo Gordón—were also Berenguela's tenants, as named in her arras diploma. Another, Count Fruela Ramírez, was the greatest lord in Asturias, where Berenguela had significant arras properties. And even though the presence of the bishops indicates that the Leonese court was nearby, few of the nobles usually in attendance upon Alfonso IX (such as Count Gómez González de Traba, Count Fernando Núñez de Lara, or Count Fernando Ponce de Cabrera) confirmed this charter.⁸⁶ That task was left to nobles who were generally of lower rank and closely associated with the queen. Since this charter was made on the same date as Martín de Buena Fé's, it appears that Berenguela—together with a few of her vassals and the bishops of the kingdom—was overseeing some of the crown's ordinary business in León. Alfonso IX may have been in the city but occupied with other matters, or he may have been elsewhere with a select few of his magnates. In either case, these documents show that Berenguela had some authority to act for the crown.

She also took part in one of the most important functions of medieval kingship: the dispensing of justice. In 1200, while the royal court was at Oviedo, a land-ownership case involving the magnate Rodrigo Abril was heard "in the presence of the king and of Queen doña Berenguela."⁸⁷ The explicit acknowledgement of the queen casts her—in this case at least—in a role similar to the king's. We can see, then, that Berenguela played a significant part in the rule of León, sometimes alongside her husband and sometimes in his apparent absence. Such activity may not have been uncommon for Castilian and Leonese queens in practice, though we rarely have direct evidence of it. Still, any queen-consort who stepped into this kind of role had to do so at her husband's sufferance. It therefore represents another aspect of the broad powers that Alfonso IX allotted to his wife.

But those powers do not represent the limits of Alfonso IX's trust in Berenguela. Having already given her a rich and strategically valuable arras, the king went on to award her two of the most important tenancies in the kingdom.⁸⁸ The first was Salamanca, in Leonese Extremadura, which she held as early as April 1199 and continued to hold at least until August 1203.⁸⁹ The second was the tenancy of the realm of Galicia. It is easy to see how the exigencies of his alliance with Castile had led Alfonso IX to bestow desirable arras properties on his queen. The tenancy of Salamanca may have been part of this program too, since it lay near the southern reaches of the

Leonese-Castilian border; Berenguela's tenancy there expanded her presence on that frontier. But why did he give Berenguela the tenancy of Galicia, which bordered Portugal and which, because of its value, would have been in hot demand among the Leonese nobles?

Berenguela had arras properties in Galicia too, of course—the five castles that her father had considered exchanging for holdings elsewhere. This was certainly a factor, but there were other issues at stake. For one thing, the lands of the old Infantazgo (held most recently by Infanta Sancha) had extended into Galicia, which set a precedent for the lordship of royal women there.⁹⁰ For another, ever since Alfonso IX had come to power—and during the reign of Fernando II as well—the tenancy of Galicia had been in the hands of Count Gómez González de Traba, a powerful magnate who also held the Galician tenancies of Monteroso, Montenegro, Sarria, and Trastámara.⁹¹ At court, he occupied first place among the lay confirmers of Alfonso IX's diplomas. Count Gómez was a force to be reckoned with.

Sometime in 1200, though, Alfonso IX got the upper hand. We can see the quarrel between the king and his magnate only in the wholesale redistribution of Count Gómez's tenancies, which leaves the reasons for their conflict obscure. But it is a testament to the strength of the Leonese crown that Alfonso IX could strip such a powerful man of his tenancies and reassign them as he pleased.⁹²

Count Gómez is last named as the tenant of Galicia in a private charter of July 20, 1200. The documents then preserve a long silence until the tenancy of Galicia appears in Berenguela's hands on January 1, 1203.⁹³ Since the possession of tenancies was a subject of lively interest to Leonese scribes, the absence of a named tenant indicates that Galicia was retained by the crown during part or all of those two and a half years—probably by Alfonso IX, who turned it over to Berenguela once the situation was more settled. Count Gómez was bound to resent the loss of his tenancy, and the king's lordship was less easily challenged than the queen's.

The loss of Galicia proper was quickly followed by the loss of Count Gómez's other tenancies. He appears as tenant of Montenegro for the last time in a diploma of November 27, 1200;⁹⁴ in another diploma made on December 12, he has been replaced there by Velasco Gómez, one of his sons. That same diploma shows him still in possession of his other Galician tenancies of Monteroso and Sarria,⁹⁵ but for the last time. After this date, Count Gómez disappears from court, and the three extant royal diplomas of February and April 1201 name no tenants in his former holdings.⁹⁶ He may have

held out a bit longer in a fourth Galician tenancy, Trastámara; one charter still records him there on March 27, 1201. But another charter made three days later is the first of many to name Rodrigo González as Trastámara's tenant.⁹⁷ By May 21, 1201, Monteroso and Sarria were in the hands of Rodrigo Díaz, and Gonzalo Yáñez held Montenegro.⁹⁸

Berenguela was deeply involved in these turnovers. Although she received only the tenancy of Galicia outright, she had considerable influence in selecting the new tenants of the other former Traba holdings. One of them, Rodrigo González, was Count Gómez's grandson;⁹⁹ his appointment to some of the count's tenancies seems more a goodwill gesture from the crown to the Traba family than a result of any personal allegiance to Berenguela. Still, his relationship with the queen was cordial enough that, years later, he confirmed a treaty between Castile and León on Berenguela's behalf.¹⁰⁰ Among the other new tenants, we have already seen that Gonzalo Yáñez, who now held Monteroso, had received the tenancy of one of Berenguela's Galician castles, Aguilar de Pedraio, in her arras diploma, and that he was part of her court in León in January 1200. As for Rodrigo Díaz, who held Monteroso and Sarria, he was actually a Castilian, Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros. He had been in attendance at the Castilian court until at least January 16, 1201.¹⁰¹ After that, he moved to León, probably to seek Berenguela's patronage, and was welcomed with two of the newly available Galician tenancies. The fact that Berenguela was able to get her clients appointed to these tenancies demonstrates that her power in Galicia, as tenant and as *domina* of her arras properties there, was active and far-reaching.

And it was indeed her power that dictated the distribution of the Galician tenancies. This is made clear by the fact that when Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros returned to Castile late in 1201, his replacement as tenant of Monteroso and Sarria was Berenguela's own majordomo, Pedro Fernández de Benavides.¹⁰² Pedro Fernández's appointment was admittedly brief; by 1203, as pressure from Rome made Berenguela's own position in León precarious, the Galician tenancies began to change hands rapidly. One recipient was Gonzalo Núñez de Lara, Castilian by birth but Leonese by preference and another tenant of the queen's arras. But the nobles who benefited most from the turnover of tenancies were Juan Fernández de Limia, a Galician magnate who was then serving as the king's majordomo, and Rodrigo González de Traba. By early 1204 their position in the Galician tenancies was secure.¹⁰³

When members of the royal family were appointed as tenants within a kingdom, it was usually part of an effort to reassert the crown's authority

over the region and its nobility.¹⁰⁴ This was certainly the case in Galicia; the awarding of tenancies there not only to Berenguela herself but also to the king's and queen's majordomos signals a desire to keep the tenancies under close royal control, a necessary sequel to the unseating of a magnate as powerful as Count Gómez. But Berenguela's influence over the selection of occupants for the newly vacant tenancies means that she had real authority in Galicia, that her tenancy there was not merely a cipher for direct control by the king.¹⁰⁵ Alfonso IX's willingness to grant such important tenancies as Salamanca and Galicia to Berenguela—and, in doing so, to let her build on the patrimonial power base that her arras had already given her—indicates that the queen of León had gained considerable stature as a member of that kingdom's monarchy. By this means, she had gained access to a third form of queenly power—patronage of the nobility, both Leonese and Castilian.

The Queen's Clients

I have already mentioned a number of magnates who enjoyed Berenguela's patronage. Although most of them were Leonese, some were Castilians who had followed her to her new court in hopes of advancement.¹⁰⁶ The logical place to begin tracing the fortunes of Berenguela's clients, both Leonese and Castilian, is with her 1199 arras diploma.

Lucas of Tuy says that, in addition to the thirty-three castles that Alfonso IX gave his wife as arras, he turned ten more castles over to Castilian magnates as a guarantee that he would uphold his end of the deal.¹⁰⁷ The numbers are unreliable, but the gist is accurate enough. Berenguela's arras diploma names thirteen men as tenants of her castles. Most of them were present when the treaty was made, and confirmed the charter overwhelmingly on behalf of the king of León.¹⁰⁸ But many of the queen's future tenants were Castilians, such as Count Fernando Núñez de Lara. He and his younger brother Gonzalo Núñez were both well placed at the Castilian court, and the presence of Alfonso VIII's daughter in the court of León held great promise for their expectations in that kingdom. Nor were they disappointed. Gonzalo Núñez held the tenancy of Asturias almost from the beginning of Berenguela's marriage, and did so explicitly on behalf of the queen.¹⁰⁹ Although he himself left the Leonese court after September 1199, his family evidently remained in Berenguela's good graces. The tenancy of Asturias was transferred to Count Fernando,¹¹⁰ and Berenguela's arras diploma gave Count Fernando

no less than seven tenancies in that region, including its greatest prize, the city of Oviedo. He also received three tenancies in Somoza. In other words, according to the diploma, Count Fernando was to hold a third of Berenguela's arras castles, far more than any other single tenant received.

The other Castilians among Berenguela's arras tenants were not provided for quite so lavishly, but they did well. Álvaro Díaz de Cameros, brother of the Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros mentioned above, was given four castles in Asturias; Alfonso IX also gave him other Leonese tenancies, such as that of Orcejón.¹¹¹ And Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón, majordomo to Alfonso VIII and head of the most powerful family in the Tierra de Campos, received the tenancy of Mansilla in that region—a first step in the long and close association between him and Berenguela. She later also gave him the tenancy of Valencia, another castle in the Tierra de Campos.¹¹²

Fernando García de Villamayor, the head of a family that had long held considerable patrimony and tenancies in the Castilian Tierra de Campos,¹¹³ joined Berenguela in León as well. Her arras diploma assigned him the tenancies of Valencia in the Tierra de Campos, of Colle in Somoza, and of Astorga. From Alfonso IX he received Benavente, also in the Tierra de Campos.¹¹⁴ More importantly, however, Alfonso IX made Fernando García his majordomo.¹¹⁵

Fernando García first appears in that post on October 17, 1197, while Alfonso IX lingered in the Tierra de Campos, negotiating the terms of his marriage.¹¹⁶ The appointment of a Castilian majordomo echoes the terms of the betrothal between Alfonso IX and Berenguela's sister Urraca in 1188, when Pedro García de Lerma accompanied Urraca to León and became Alfonso IX's majordomo. Although the status of the king's majordomo in León had never been quite as high as it was in Castile, it is striking that the man who filled that trusted royal office was a Castilian client of the queen's.

The rest of Berenguela's tenants were Leonese. I have already mentioned Gonzalo Yáñez, who received a castle in Galicia; Osorio Yáñez, perhaps his brother, received another. Alfonso IX also gave Gonzalo Yáñez the Galician tenancies of Lemos and Limia, as well as that of Benavente.¹¹⁷ Sebastián Gutiérrez, Pelayo Gordón, and Pelayo Subredina are more difficult to trace, though they each confirmed various diplomas throughout Alfonso IX's reign. And Pedro Peláez de Asturias became a frequent presence at court after 1214. But it is the other three Leonese who deserve attention most.

The first is Rodrigo Pérez de Villalobos. He was one of those nobles who had always moved comfortably from Castile to León and back again. When Berenguela married Alfonso IX, Rodrigo Pérez had been settled at the court

of Castile for two years. In 1198, however, he returned to León. Berenguela's arras diploma made him the tenant of Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga in the Tierra de Campos; she later also gave him Asturias.¹¹⁸ His extensive patrimony in the Tierra de Campos, where he had previously held other important tenancies,¹¹⁹ made him a natural ally for Berenguela—and vice versa. Their association was a successful one, for better and for worse; when Berenguela left León in 1204, Rodrigo Pérez did too.¹²⁰ Although he eventually resumed his peregrinations between the kingdoms, his dedication to Berenguela was such that even in 1214, a full ten years after her marriage had been dissolved, he still referred to her as the wife of Alfonso IX and the reigning queen of León.¹²¹

Rodrigo Pérez's real wealth, however, came as the tenant of royal properties that Alfonso IX had specifically excluded from Berenguela's arras. One was Villafáfila, which lay in the Tierra de Campos not far from Villalobos itself.¹²² The others—Coria, Toro, and Zamora—were either in Leonese Extremadura, the region dominated by Berenguela's own tenancy of Salamanca, or in the Leonese Transierra, even farther south, along a border shared with Castile, Portugal, and al-Andalus. In fact, Rodrigo Pérez received the regional tenancies of Extremadura and Transierra as well,¹²³ thus becoming the preeminent noble on the southern Leonese frontier. He acquired most of these tenancies in late 1198 and early 1199—that is, at about the time that Berenguela acquired Salamanca,¹²⁴ which argues that her appointment to that tenancy influenced Rodrigo Pérez's appointment to tenancies nearby. Alfonso IX had thus granted his wife significant authority in precisely the regions that he had excluded from her direct control in 1199. The same pattern holds true elsewhere: Gonzalo Yáñez and Fernando García de Villamayor both received, at different times, the tenancy of Benavente in the Tierra de Campos, which Alfonso IX had also excluded from Berenguela's arras. Of course, the power of tenancy was substantially less than the power of possessing a castle as arras; tenancies were held only at the king's pleasure, while arras properties were theoretically granted for life. But Berenguela's control of and influence over tenancies in the sensitive areas of the southern border reveals the large scope of her lordship in the kingdom.

Another Leonese client of the queen's was Muño Rodríguez, who held three arras castles in the Tierra de Campos: Castrogonzalo, Castroverde, and Villalugán.¹²⁵ Although his background is obscure, Muño Rodríguez became Alfonso IX's *alférez* at the very beginning of the king's marriage to Berenguela, and kept that post almost until the very end.¹²⁶ That his placement in

the high-ranking office of *alférez* rose and fell with Berenguela's fortunes indicates that his advancement was due to the queen.

The third, and perhaps most interesting, was Pedro Fernández de Benavides. I have already mentioned him as Berenguela's majordomo, an office he held throughout her marriage.¹²⁷ It was customary for queens to have their own majordomos, as Berenguela's mother, Leonor, had done.¹²⁸ But it was not usual for the queen's majordomo to confirm royal diplomas, as Pedro Fernández de Benavides did regularly. It was certainly not usual for him to append his title to the confirmation—“*regine domne B. maiordomo*”—in the way that the king's majordomo did. Pedro Fernández de Benavides was not on equal footing with Alfonso IX's majordomo; he usually confirmed diplomas in last place, a sign that he ranked below all the other nobles at court. Even so, he and his office had been elevated far beyond anything that a queen's majordomo had a right to expect. Berenguela's own high status in the court of León—her lordship, her control of tenancies, and the independent power given her by her arras—was reflected in the status of the chief officer of her household.

However, Pedro Fernández de Benavides was not a Castilian. He was a Leonese noble with a long record of service to Alfonso IX, as the king's merino mayor and as the tenant of, most importantly, the fortifications (“towers”) of the city of León.¹²⁹ He had resumed the tenancy of the towers of León shortly before Berenguela's marriage, then retained it for several years while also serving as the queen's majordomo¹³⁰—a fact that lends credibility to Lucas of Tuy's claim that Alfonso IX gave Berenguela control over the towers of León. Since Pedro Fernández de Benavides had ties to Alfonso IX but not to the Castilian court, it seems that Berenguela's husband influenced the appointment of her majordomo much as she had influenced that of his.

The nobles of the Leonese court—and of Castile too—looked to Berenguela for patronage, and she was well able to supply it. Moreover, men who were in her favor could expect largesse not only from the queen but from Alfonso IX as well; Berenguela's tenants often received additional tenancies from the king. The patronage that Berenguela bestowed on her supporters probably represents the typical practice of medieval queens, though it is rarely so well documented. However, the scope of Berenguela's influence may have been greater than that of most queens, since she invested her queenship with unusual agency and authority. Just how unusual it was can be seen by comparing Berenguela with another queen of León—Alfonso IX's first wife, Teresa of Portugal.

Two Queens of León

In 1191, after his initial alliance with Castile had soured, Alfonso IX had turned toward Portugal. The Portuguese king, Sancho I—whose own hot-and-cold relationship with Castile had once again gone cold—offered Alfonso IX his own hand in friendship, and the hand of his daughter Teresa in marriage.¹³¹

Alfonso IX was betrothed to Teresa by mid-February of 1191, and had married her by March 29 that year.¹³² However, the new spouses were first cousins—Alfonso IX's mother was Urraca of Portugal, sister to Sancho I. Their marriage was therefore consanguineous, and Pope Celestine III pressured them to separate. He excommunicated Alfonso IX and Sancho I, and laid their kingdoms under interdict for as long as the illicit union continued. Although the kings tried to negotiate a settlement, the pope soon forced them into retreat. Teresa returned to her father's court in 1194, her marriage and her father's alliance both broken.¹³³

Teresa's brief sojourn in León had profound repercussions for Berenguela. For one thing, the unpleasantness it had occasioned with Rome encouraged both Alfonso IX and Alfonso VIII to shield their alliance from the blow it would sustain if this marriage, too, were annulled; this was one reason why Berenguela's arras diploma made careful provisions for the disposition of her property in the event that she and Alfonso IX separated. But even more importantly, Berenguela was marrying a king who had already had three children with Teresa: a son, Fernando, and two daughters, Sancha and Dulce. That is, Alfonso IX had a male heir, albeit one who was only four or five years old and illegitimate in the eyes of the Church. Any children Berenguela bore would have to contend with this older half-brother for their rights in León once their father died.

Alfonso VIII was well aware of the danger that Teresa and her children posed. If Alfonso IX gave them precedence over Berenguela, then the Castilian-Leonese alliance would be virtually worthless; Berenguela's children might never reign in León, and Alfonso IX would always be more closely bound to Portugal than to Castile. The terms of Berenguela's marriage, therefore, required that she be accorded a higher status than Teresa.

This stipulation, and the ways in which it was carried out, are visible in the surviving documents. During the three years of her marriage, Teresa co-issued four royal diplomas with her husband—three of them within the same month. The fourth, given in February of 1192, was her last.¹³⁴ Her subsequent

disappearance was presumably a diplomatic ploy, meant to allay Rome's hostility toward the marriage. Within León, Teresa kept her queenly status. Her continued childbearing shows that Alfonso IX still recognized her as his wife, and her regular appearances alongside the king in the dating formulas of individual charters show that her subjects did too.

Nevertheless, Teresa's virtual absence from her husband's diplomas, even in the early months of her marriage, contrasts strikingly with Berenguela's continual presence. The four diplomas that Teresa co-issued with Alfonso IX make up only nine percent of the 43 royal diplomas that survive from the period between her betrothal to Alfonso IX and the probable end of her marriage.¹³⁵ Nor is she known to have issued any independent diplomas as queen of León. Berenguela issued at least eight independent diplomas and co-issued 80 percent of Alfonso IX's diplomas—and did this while her marriage was also under fierce assault from Rome, for the same problem of consanguinity that had undone Teresa's.

Berenguela's repeated appearance in royal acts is significant on several levels. It indicates that she was usually present at court—a conclusion that cannot be made about Teresa. Traveling with the court put Berenguela into close association with her husband and his courtiers. Her opportunities to exercise lordship, both formally and informally, thereby increased. Historians of queenship have long argued that, in an era when power depended on access, a queen was a desirable ally for anyone who sought favors from the king.¹³⁶ The success of Berenguela's noble clients in gaining benefits both from her and from her husband illustrates the importance not only of their regular personal contact with her at court, but also of her own access to Alfonso IX.

To her contemporaries, the authority that Alfonso IX gave his wife by including her in his diplomas signaled that Berenguela had superseded Teresa as queen of León. Elsewhere in Europe, the problem of precedence among a king's wives might be resolved by a coronation ceremony, in which one wife was elevated as the "legitimate" queen. But in Castile and León, where coronation of queens *or* kings was atypical,¹³⁷ other signifiers were necessary. The considerations given to Berenguela by Alfonso IX declared that although her marriage might be no more valid than Teresa's in the eyes of Rome, in the eyes of the king it was. Although Teresa still held the title of queen and a few Leonese castles (the remnants of her arras),¹³⁸ Berenguela controlled lands, dispensed patronage, and exercised lordship in a way that Teresa could not do then, and perhaps had never done. There is, for example, no evidence that

Teresa held tenancies during her marriage, which limited both her capacity for lordship and her ability to reward clients. Berenguela's greater power and status advised the court and kingdom that just as Alfonso IX's second queen had taken precedence over his first, so Berenguela's children would replace Teresa's as the heirs to León.

Alfonso IX had never formally recognized Fernando, his son with Teresa, as his heir. The boy did not co-issue his father's diplomas, as Berenguela's brothers had each done since birth and as Alfonso IX himself had done throughout the 1180s.¹³⁹ This may, again, have been due to papal disapproval, but it made the king's subsequent decision to establish Berenguela's children as his heirs considerably easier.

Berenguela bore five children. The oldest, Leonor, did not live long; she died on November 11, 1202, and was buried in the church of San Isidoro in León.¹⁴⁰ By then, Berenguela and Alfonso IX had had another daughter, Constanza¹⁴¹—and a son, who, like his half-brother, had been named Fernando in honor of his paternal grandfather.¹⁴² They subsequently added another son and daughter, who received the same names as their parents: Alfonso and Berenguela.¹⁴³ But until Fernando was born, none of Berenguela's children appeared in Alfonso IX's diplomas. The king was clearly not so committed to his alliance with Castile as to make Berenguela's daughters his heirs in place of Teresa's son. Berenguela's son Fernando, however, began to co-issue diplomas very soon after he was born in the summer of 1201.¹⁴⁴ He continued to do so for as long as his parents' marriage endured and even, apparently, after it fell apart. And the contestable nature of his claim to the Leonese throne led to a most explicit declaration of Alfonso IX's choice of heir.

In March 1202 Alfonso IX summoned his "bishops, my vassals, and many people from every town in my kingdom" to a *curia plena*, the so-called "Cortes" of Benavente.¹⁴⁵ Fairly little is known about the proceedings of this assembly,¹⁴⁶ though Berenguela and Fernando co-issued the decrees that have survived, just as they did with other coetaneous diplomas. But one of the *curia's* purposes was probably to have the gathered prelates, magnates, and townspeople swear fealty to Berenguela's son.¹⁴⁷

There are two reasons to think so. First, in 1203 Pope Innocent III chastised Alfonso VIII of Castile for not only failing to end Berenguela's canonical marriage, but also trying to secure inheritance rights for Berenguela's children. If the marriage was invalid, then the children born to Alfonso IX and Berenguela were illegitimate, and had no claim to inherit anything from

their father—certainly not a kingdom.¹⁴⁸ Yet, fumed Innocent, once Fernando was born, “you—and we are more than a little amazed by this—cunningly managed to have the entire kingdom of León swear to him.”¹⁴⁹

Second, decades later, after Fernando III had in fact succeeded to the throne of León, Archbishop Rodrigo made much of the fact that “the bishops, magnates, and city councils had sworn [fealty] to him twice, at his father’s command.”¹⁵⁰ The pope’s letter refers to an occasion when “the entire kingdom” had sworn fealty to Fernando between 1201 and 1203, and if the DRH is accurate, the oath was taken at an assembly that included bishops, nobles, and people from the Leonese towns. Such assemblies were not common; it seems, then, that one purpose of the *curia* of Benavente was to secure Infante Fernando’s rights as heir.

In speaking of an oath made by “the entire kingdom of León,” the pope’s letter recalls the Treaty of Seligenstadt’s prescription for the oaths that Berenguela and Conrad were to receive upon their marriage—oaths made not just by prelates and nobles, whose fealty had legitimized royal heirs since the early twelfth century, but also by town representatives. For the Castilians, peace on the border was possible only if Berenguela’s son became the next Leonese king. But because of his older half-brother, Infante Fernando’s right to inherit his father’s kingdom was precarious. The Castilians sought to shore up Fernando’s claim to León just as they had shored up his mother’s claim to Castile—by having him formally and publicly acknowledged as heir, not just by Alfonso IX but by his future subjects too.

It is noteworthy that for this occasion, the Castilians exported a ritual that, so far as we know, had previously been used only to support the tenuous position of a female heir. Fernando’s handicap was his age, not his gender. But the Castilian royal family evidently believed that the oaths taken in 1188 had served a purpose, even if they had never been put to the test. In uncertain times, it was best not to rely on royal dictates, or even on the will of the kingdom’s great lords. The consent and support of as large a group (of elites) as possible were what lent credibility to a problematic heir.

Just as Alfonso IX had constructed and allowed Berenguela to construct a queenship qualitatively different from Teresa’s, so he constructed a greater status and legitimacy for Berenguela’s son than for Teresa’s. Having the younger Fernando co-issue his diplomas—and summoning the elites of his kingdom to pledge their loyalty to Fernando publicly—declared that the child of this second marriage, not of the first, was designated to succeed his father in power.

Yet these careful contrivances were the product of alarm. Since the very beginning of negotiations between León and Castile, it had been clear that the marriage would invite Rome's wrath. Pope Innocent III had begun almost immediately to rain threats of excommunication and interdict upon both kingdoms, demanding that the couple separate. But if Berenguela left León, the frail peace that her marriage had created would almost certainly collapse. All the structures of her marriage, from her arras diploma to the prompt and public designation of her son as heir to the kingdom, were aimed at preserving the Leonese-Castilian alliance in the event that its linchpin, Berenguela, had to be removed. And all the authority and honor that she had attained as queen of León, the partnership that she had built with Alfonso IX, was acquired and exercised in an increasingly ominous atmosphere. The end was inevitable; the only surprise was that the monarchs staved it off for seven years.

Nevertheless, those seven years offer a remarkable portrait of what a queen-consort might achieve when she had access to real authority. Berenguela's control of the castles and lands of her arras was firm; she awarded tenancies there to nobles she favored, and changed them again as she pleased. But, with Alfonso IX's consent, she was able to expand her power well outside the boundaries of her own lands. As tenant of Salamanca and Galicia, she controlled or influenced the selection of tenants for other crown properties in the same region. This increased her opportunities for patronage, an essential tool for securing support for herself and for her son, whose claim to the throne would fail without substantial Leonese endorsement. But her ability to dispense patronage was also in keeping with her hefty share of royal lordship in León, which included participating in royal jurisdiction, managing court business, and attending judicial hearings alongside the king.

Such activities may have lain within the power of any queen, but the existing documentation seldom records them. Berenguela's case is exceptional precisely because it is so well attested, allowing us to see, with unusual clarity, the ways in which a queen could acquire and use formal authority. Yet Berenguela may be exceptional in other senses, too. While she followed the practices of other queens of her era (by having a personal majordomo, for example, or by regularly co-issuing diplomas), she also built on them. Berenguela surpassed Alfonso IX's first queen, Teresa, in terms of formal participation in Leonese affairs, and exceeded even her mother by having a majordomo who was recognized in royal diplomas. Her son Fernando's elevation as heir to León was both the purpose and the consequence of her own

preeminence. But that very preeminence may account for the abundance of documentation she left behind, making her a useful case study for the upper limits, but not the averages, of queenly power.

Even if that is so, it is instructive to see what a queen-consort *could* accomplish under the right circumstances. And Berenguela's accomplishments as queen of León defined the course of her entire life. Even after her marriage was dissolved, she struggled to preserve and assert the authority it had given her—especially her authority over her arras properties. In doing this, she turned her arras possessions into a considerable seignior on the Leonese-Castilian border, protected her investments in the loyalty of certain magnates, and established herself as the agent and arbiter of the troubled peace between the two kingdoms.

Chapter 3

The Unwed Queen, 1204–1214

On April 16, 1198, about six months after Berenguela's wedding and just four months after his own election as pope, Innocent III issued a blistering denunciation of the Castilian-Leonese marriage in a letter to Rainerius, his legate in Iberia:

Reliable information has reached us that our most dear son in Christ, the king of Castile, dared to—let us not say marry—to incestuously submit his daughter to the illustrious king of León, whose relative she is, and to whom he is related in the second degree of consanguinity. . . . Wherefore we command both of them, setting aside all delays and excuses, to renounce such a shameful contract, abominable in the sight of the Lord and execrable in the judgement of the faithful, and to dissolve all the bonds of impiety that they undertook between themselves on the pretext of this incest. . . . and if they should remain obstinate about this, which we do not believe, do not hesitate to promulgate sentences of excommunication upon them and of interdict upon the land.¹

The first shot had been fired in the seven-year war that would rage between the Iberian monarchs and the court of Rome over Berenguela's marriage. Innocent III was not a man to be easily mollified, and it became clear early in the contest that the marriage had no chance of survival. For Castile and León, the goal of the struggle quickly changed from preserving the royal union to delaying the inevitable separation until some resolution could be reached regarding Berenguela's arras castles.

Negotiations over those castles, which had been the cause and foundation of the marriage, went on continually between 1198 and 1204. But once Berenguela and Alfonso IX separated, all hope of peaceable compromise seemed to vanish. War again broke out in the Tierra de Campos, punctuated by a series of treaties that repeated, qualified, and insisted upon the terms of earlier agreements. Berenguela, who had enjoyed such broad authority as queen of León, found her domain reduced to a limited personal seignior along the Leonese-Castilian border, whose boundaries were under constant threat.

Royal women who found themselves in the position Berenguela occupied between 1204 and 1214—in law unmarried, in practice unmarriageable, with no prospects of ever again attaining a throne themselves and with children whose own claim to power was nonexistent or gravely threatened—usually fade from view. The record of their activities becomes scant, they sink into an apparent semi-retirement, and they often fail to recover their former status even if one of their children does eventually come to power. Yet in this situation, which could have reduced Berenguela to a pawn, she remained a queen. Not only did she defend her own and her sons' interests on the Leonese-Castilian border, but she also acquired enough power there that, ten years later, she used the region as a steppingstone to the Castilian crown.

The end of Berenguela's marriage should have been the end of her career. That it was not is a testament to her ability and ambition. While it is unlikely that she could have accomplished as much as she did without Alfonso VIII's authority and armies behind her, Berenguela was an active participant, not a passive object, in the uneasy relationship between her natal and adopted kingdoms long after she had left León. This period, which on the surface appears to be one of the least dramatic of her eventful life, was the one that made her later successes possible, for it was then that she secured her power over the personal domain that formed the basis of her every future accomplishment.

The War with Rome

Innocent III's initial threats did not prompt Alfonso IX and Berenguela to separate. Observing their recalcitrance, the papal legate, Rainerius, excommunicated Alfonso IX and laid the kingdom of León under interdict;² but this had little effect. The Leonese bishops, with their usual fidelity to royal wishes

over papal ones, neglected to enforce the interdict within their dioceses. The only exception was the bishop of Oviedo, Juan, whose reward for obeying the pope's command was to lose his property and be exiled from the kingdom.³

Although Innocent's threats had been directed at him as much as at his son-in-law, Alfonso VIII escaped both excommunication and interdict. He had assured Rainerius that he was ready to obey the pope, and would take Berenguela back if she were returned to him. This show of compliance temporarily averted papal wrath,⁴ but made Castile's role essentially passive. Alfonso VIII had thrown all responsibility for the separation onto Alfonso IX. If his son-in-law sent Berenguela home, he would receive her; until then, he could do nothing but wait.⁵

This pious attitude suggests the tensions that still underlay the Castilian-Leonese alliance. Rome's attack on Berenguela's marriage was of paramount importance to both kingdoms, and both sought to resist it together. But Alfonso VIII preserved his posture of obedience as long as he could, thereby protecting himself and Castile from the ecclesiastical sanctions that were raining down onto León. This was sensible, certainly, but it was disingenuous too.

Yet in leaving his son-in-law exposed to punishment, Alfonso VIII had not abandoned his daughter. At this point, from Rome's perspective, Berenguela scarcely mattered. As in the passage quoted above, Innocent's letters attacked Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX for contracting the illicit union, but referred to Berenguela only as a token handed from one king to the other. Even as he pressured Alfonso IX to send her home, Innocent had not threatened or punished Berenguela herself; in May of 1199 Rainerius "promulgated the sentence of excommunication *upon him*"—upon Alfonso IX—while Berenguela went unmentioned.⁶ In the eyes of Rome, she was powerless to return to Castile of her own volition, and she could not be punished for failing to do so. Alfonso VIII's passive stance therefore put Berenguela at no risk, even though it increased the pressure on Alfonso IX.

The Church's position was not simple misogyny. What was at stake was the Castilian-Leonese alliance, which had been constructed around Berenguela by her husband and parents. It had not been her idea to enter this uncanonical marriage, and it was entirely possible that she was not free to leave it; she was in Alfonso IX's custody, and he could keep her there by threats or force if he chose.⁷ Imposing canonical sanctions on a woman in this situation would have been unjust. Berenguela's position in León was not

really so circumscribed, however; indeed, she was an active partner in the effort to preserve her marriage and the Leonese-Castilian peace. By the spring of 1199, this was becoming clear to Innocent III.

Notwithstanding his submissive posturing, Alfonso VIII had sent emissaries to Rome that year to plead for the marriage's survival. Archbishop Martín of Toledo and Bishop Arderico of Palencia, along with Bishop Martín of Zamora on behalf of Alfonso IX, had asked Innocent to grant a dispensation to the monarchs of León, which would retroactively legitimize their marriage. Innocent was so incensed at the bishops' presumption that he was tempted to strike them with the severest ecclesiastical penalties to make them an example to others. He refrained only because of "the special favor that we have for the devotion of the king of Castile"⁸—a devotion chiefly manifested in Alfonso VIII's efforts on behalf of the Iberian crusade.

The Castilian-Leonese delegation tried again, however. Having had their request for a dispensation roundly denied, they now asked Innocent at least to lift the interdict on León. The enforced silence from the pulpit, they claimed, together with the people's anxiety about their own salvation while they were denied access to the Church's sacraments, encouraged heresy, impoverished the clergy, and distracted people from their spiritual duty to fight the Almohads. Innocent hesitated. He would not lift the interdict entirely or permanently. But he did agree to lift it provisionally, except that it remained in force on any city, town, or fortress where the Leonese monarchs were in residence.⁹

Already there had been a shift in Innocent's thinking about the problem. The interdict was imposed on any place where Alfonso IX *and* Berenguela—"the king of León and the daughter of the king of Castile"—were present.¹⁰ Now, too, both spouses had been excommunicated, and so had "all their principal advisors and supporters." In part, this was a pressure tactic like the interdict, meant to sap support for the marriage by forcing the monarchs' associates to share their punishment. Innocent knew perfectly well that pressure from the kingdom's elites could effectively reshape the monarchy. But Berenguela's excommunication—and, implicitly, that of *her* supporters as well as Alfonso IX's—shows that Rome now considered her complicit in her father's and husband's efforts to keep the marriage going.

Innocent had realized that this was not a question of royal defiance or even simply of an alliance between kingdoms; it was a question of Berenguela's arras castles. From his point of view, however, the solution was simple enough:

For certain castles, which the king of León proposed to give to the daughter of the king of Castile as dower, such that if he should ever abandon her they would fall under her control, seem to present an obstacle to the dissolution of this union. Since those castles should not have been given either for this shameful cause or for any better one, inasmuch as no marriage exists between them, and therefore he should give her neither dower nor a marriage portion nor a gift for her benefit . . . we wish those castles to be returned and that girl to be constrained to do it by the sentence of excommunication.¹¹

Berenguela had been excommunicated in an effort to force her to give up her arras castles. Through this decision, Rome acknowledged that she was in command of the castles, and that her active cooperation was required to effect their transfer to the king of León. That view had been encouraged, perhaps inadvertently, by Alfonso VIII. In trying to excuse his protracted failure to return the arras castles to Alfonso IX, he had told Innocent that it was not possible for him to return them, “because they were held not by him, but by his daughter.”¹²

Alfonso VIII’s testimony to his daughter’s independent lordship over her arras properties squares nicely with the evidence from within León. But Innocent’s recognition of her authority admitted Berenguela as a full player in the conflict between the Leonese-Castilian monarchs and the pope, and exposed her to all the consequent dangers.

Innocent had also grown suspicious of Alfonso VIII’s letters promising adherence to the Church’s commands; he now demanded that the king of Castile do more than simply wait for his daughter to come home. And for the first time, he expected action from Queen Leonor as well. He ordered “the king of Castile and our most dear daughter in Christ, the queen his wife” to do everything in their power to break up their daughter’s marriage. If they failed to act, Castile would suffer excommunication and interdict, just as León had.

Innocent understood, however, that the return of the arras castles would not necessarily close the issue. By the spring of 1199, Berenguela had begun to bear children, who could claim a right to inherit not only her Leonese properties but even the kingdom itself. Innocent therefore followed his demand for the return of the castles with the declaration that any children Berenguela bore were illegitimate, and so had no right to inherit anything of their father’s.¹³

Alfonso VIII was now in an uncomfortable position. Obeying Innocent meant working actively to destroy Castile's claim to the valuable border region that Berenguela commanded.¹⁴ And Berenguela had not yet produced a son who might reasonably pursue that claim in the future. It was this crisis that precipitated the negotiation or confirmation of Berenguela's arras agreement in December 1199, which so carefully enumerated the fate of the castles in case the spouses separated.¹⁵ Notably, this agreement makes no claims about the rights of Berenguela's children to inherit their father's kingdom, even though it states that any surviving son *or daughter* would inherit Berenguela's arras properties from her. Since there was still no future king in the nursery, it may have seemed impractical to bind both Castile and León to defiance of papal commands on behalf of Berenguela's daughters, whose illegitimacy would not be the principal obstacle to their inheritance of León.

But in the summer of 1201 a son was born to Berenguela and Alfonso IX, and he promptly appeared in his father's diplomas as the presumptive heir. As we have seen, in 1203 Innocent III accused Alfonso VIII of stage-managing Infante Fernando's acknowledgement as heir at the Cortes of Benavente. In fact, the pope declared, affairs in León were entirely under Castilian control:

Since you assigned counselors from your own land to the king [of León], and his fortifications are almost universally occupied by your men, you lead him around at your will as if you had put a bit in his mouth, and make use of his land almost as much as of your own kingdom.¹⁶

The pope knew that Castilian nobles had followed Berenguela to León, had been made tenants of her castles, and served in prominent positions at court. He also knew that Castile had been the alliance's dominant partner from the beginning. Above all, he understood that the alliance's real aim, from Alfonso VIII's perspective, was to bring Berenguela's arras castles under permanent Castilian control:

As we have learned through frequent reports, and as public opinion proclaims, you have ensnared that king [Alfonso IX] to such an extent, and have so preyed upon his simplicity, that it would not be possible for him to separate from your daughter, even if he wanted to, without great expense to his kingdom. For you would receive

many, and the best, of the fortifications of the kingdom of León in your daughter's name if she were put aside by the king, and you would put them into the hands of your own men just as you are doing now, and they would belong to your daughter.¹⁷

Alfonso VIII had ensured that the terms of the marriage guaranteed a huge financial and territorial loss to León if Berenguela was mistreated or sent home. Since it had always been likely that Rome would dissolve the marriage, he may indeed have planned everything in the expectation that Berenguela would be sent home, and that her arras would follow her. However, because Innocent's letter is an invective, it is necessary to sort out (where possible) the basis for his accusations.

Innocent claimed that Berenguela's authority over the castles was a fiction; when the marriage ended, the arras would come under the direct control of Alfonso VIII, who was acting only "in your daughter's name." Yet the letter itself hints that this assertion is not wholly true. Alfonso VIII might receive the castles, and he might assign them to Castilian tenants, but "they would belong to your daughter" (*eidem tue filie remansuras*). That phrase acknowledges that Berenguela would hold authority over the castles, even once she was home in Castile. Certainly Alfonso VIII could expect broad de facto control over Berenguela's arras; her separation would probably spark war with León, and the defense of her properties would fall to him, not her. Nevertheless, the king of Castile does not seem to have been planning a simple land grab. Berenguela's jurisdiction over her castles would be recognized both by her father and, implicitly, by the pope.

Innocent sent this letter to Alfonso VIII on June 5, 1203, adding that if the king persisted in his disobedience, "the warning will be followed by a vengeance more severe than you might think."¹⁸ The pope was losing patience. The monarchs had now been fighting this battle for more than five years, and the clock was running out.

Not many Leonese diplomas survive from the latter half of 1203. Those that do exist suggest that Berenguela may have left Alfonso IX's court after July that year, perhaps in response to Innocent's ire. If so, she remained within León, keeping both her title and, to some extent, her authority. The last diploma on which her name and her husband's appear together was actually issued by Berenguela, "with the consent of my husband King don Alfonso" and the corroboration of their toddler son Fernando, in the city of

León; in it, Berenguela donated some houses that she had purchased in Salamanca to the military Order of Salvatierra.¹⁹ In July 1203, then, her authority in the kingdom of León was essentially unchanged. She could still issue diplomas in her own name and in the presence of the full court; her majordomo, Pedro Fernández de Benavides, was still there to confirm her acts along with the other court officers; and she still held both personal property in and the royal tenancy of Salamanca, as she would continue to do until at least August 1203.²⁰

After this, however, the situation becomes more obscure. Alfonso IX issued diplomas in July and October 1203 with no mention of Berenguela, though both these documents have abbreviated or missing lists of confirmers.²¹ And Berenguela issued a writ that December from Castrotoraf, a property that belonged to the crown and not to her; this was a donation to the monastery of San Pedro de Eslonza, a frequent recipient of her patronage.²² Like most writs, this one has no co-issuers and no confirmers; it rests on Berenguela's authority alone.

The record is not much better in early 1204, when only one royal diploma survives. But by the time it was made, in February, it seems very likely that the king and queen had separated; Alfonso IX issued the diploma from Galicia, and he had appointed a new majordomo and *alférez* to replace Fernando García de Villamayor and Muño Rodríguez, who had held those offices throughout Berenguela's marriage.²³

Had Berenguela already returned to Castile? Her parents were in Valladolid, on the Castilian-Leonese border and just south of Berenguela's arras properties, in late February 1204; diplomas from April and May show them in Valladolid still.²⁴ It was, in fact, in Valladolid that Leonor bore her last child that April²⁵—a son, named Enrique after her own father. And it was almost certainly during these months that Leonor's oldest child came back to her. Alfonso VIII's diplomas of May 6, 1204, issued in Valladolid, include Fernando García de Villamayor among their confirmers; the presence of Alfonso IX's ousted Castilian majordomo in Alfonso VIII's court suggests that Berenguela too had returned by this time, with her clients in tow. González notes the bitter irony that her marriage ended in Valladolid, the same place where it had begun six and a half years earlier.²⁶

By May 1204, too, the bishops of Toledo and Burgos had already written to Innocent III to inform him that Berenguela had left her husband, was penitent, and humbly sought to have her sentence of excommunication lifted. Having achieved his victory, the pope was willing to be merciful. On

May 22, Innocent instructed the bishops to absolve the “noble woman,” on the condition that she obey his commands in the future and that she never return to Alfonso IX.²⁷ Alfonso IX received allowance for absolution a month later; Innocent’s letter for him is almost identical to his letter for Berenguela, except that Alfonso IX’s advisors and supporters were absolved along with him, and he was forbidden either to return to Berenguela or to receive her if she tried to return to him.²⁸

Innocent III had brought about the dissolution of the marriage and the (at least ostensible) disinheritance of young Fernando. He had not, however, resolved the debate over Berenguela’s arras. He had not even made its return a stated condition of absolving either Berenguela or Alfonso IX. The pope was hardly a man to back down from a fight, but he must have been as aware as the Castilians and Leonese themselves that the conflict over Berenguela’s and Fernando’s rights in León would be a long and bitter one. And if he had not realized it at once, the Castilians and Leonese quickly reminded him. By summer 1204, war had broken out again on the border.

War and Peace in the Tierra de Campos, 1204–1209

Signs of trouble had been evident since May. Even though Berenguela had left León only weeks before, and even though Alfonso IX was still acknowledging their son as his heir, a diploma Alfonso IX issued that month lists Diego López de Haro in first place among its noble confirmers, with the honorific title of “king’s vassal.”²⁹ Diego López, who was, in happier times, a trusted and valued friend to Alfonso VIII,³⁰ had been exiled from Castile since 1201. His welcome in León suggests that relations between the two kingdoms were no longer entirely friendly. By late June, Alfonso IX had awarded Diego López the valuable tenancies of Astorga, Asturias, and the city of León³¹—giving him, in other words, control over important sections of Berenguela’s arras.

Diego López’s tenancies in Asturias and the city of León established him as the dominant magnate on the northern Castilian-Leonese border. The southern border was similarly protected—by another exile, Pedro Fernández de Castro, known in León as “the Castilian.” Absent from the Castilian court since 1188, Pedro Fernández had spent some of the intervening years in León, and others in the service of the Almohads. Now that relations between Castile and León had once again soured, he returned to Alfonso IX’s court and

received the tenancies of Leonese Extremadura and Transierra.³² Alfonso IX was preparing what for León was a necessary defense against an approaching war. But in doing so he had also provoked the Castilian monarchs, by placing some of their most dangerous enemies in control of key portions of Berenguela's arras.

This is not to suggest, however, that the flow of disaffected magnates was entirely one-sided. At least one Leonese noble, Rodrigo Pérez de Villalobos, was in Alfonso VIII's court during the conflict. He confirms a diploma for Alfonso IX in February 1204, then disappears; he resurfaces in Castile on August 31 that year, perhaps in the wake of his queen.³³

Hostilities between Castile and León had probably broken out well before the end of June, when we have the first documentary evidence of Diego López's and Pedro Fernández's control of their Leonese tenancies. By July 3, Alfonso VIII had already fielded an army on the southern Leonese border, and Alfonso IX was struggling to raise cash for his own.³⁴ The CLRC is in no doubt of how the conflict came about: "The reason for the discord between the glorious king of Castile and the king of León was that the king of León had put aside the king of Castile's daughter, Queen doña Berenguela, with whom the king of León had already had two sons and two daughters."³⁵ The chronicler says nothing of the reasons for the separation; although he acknowledges elsewhere that the marriage was consanguineous, he implies here that Alfonso IX dismissed Berenguela on his own whim. This casts Alfonso IX's actions as an affront to Castile, to which warfare was an appropriate response.

The initial conflict seems to have been confined largely to the southern border, where Alfonso VIII met with his usual success. However, the only castles he is known to have captured were not, strictly speaking, Leonese; they belonged to the Hospitallers.³⁶ The kings soon made peace, perhaps because Alfonso VIII was preparing a campaign into the French duchy of Gascoigne and wanted the Leonese border secure in his absence.³⁷ The fruits of their negotiation are visible in the will that Alfonso VIII made in December 1204.

The will provided for the disposition of eleven castles that Alfonso VIII had, at various times, captured from León. All of them lay along the Castilian-Leonese border, from Asturias (Siero de Asturias, Siero de Riaño) to Extremadura (Carpio, Monreal). Seven—Almanza, Bolaños, Castroponce, Castrotierra, Melgar, Valderas, and Villafrechós—were in the heart of the

Tierra de Campos. Five of the castles had been named in the treaty of Tordesumbras in 1194, among the properties that Alfonso VIII was required to return to the king of León upon his death.³⁸ Ten years later, Alfonso VIII reworked the terms of that treaty. These five castles were now to go to Infante Fernando, son of Alfonso IX and Berenguela, rather than to Alfonso IX himself; but Fernando would also get six additional castles that the Leonese monarch had long struggled to recover.³⁹

Ultimately, this compromise was in the interests of both kingdoms. Innocent III had already testified to Alfonso VIII's determination that young Fernando should inherit León. Now, if Fernando did one day occupy the Leonese throne, eleven castles that Castile had taken would be restored to León through him. If, however, Alfonso IX put up another heir in Fernando's place, those eleven castles were likely to be alienated from León forever.

The will also betrays Alfonso VIII's anxiety over the defection of Diego López de Haro and Pedro Fernández de Castro, the Castilian magnates who had joined the Leonese side of the conflict. He proffered olive branches to them both—the will would restore some of their most important patrimonial possessions, along with other heritable properties that the king had confiscated.⁴⁰

This show of good faith won Pedro Fernández back to Castile. He ceased to confirm Leonese diplomas after November 1204, and his tenancies there were redistributed.⁴¹ Diego López de Haro was not so easily wooed. By the beginning of 1205, Pedro Fernández de Castro's former tenancy of Leonese Extremadura had been reassigned to Diego López's son, Lope Díaz de Haro, who had not yet even made his debut at the court of Alfonso VIII.⁴² This gift made the Haro tenants of most of the Leonese side of the border. The portion that they did not hold—the Leonese Transierra—appears to have been retained by the crown, leaving Alfonso IX in direct control there.⁴³ Meanwhile, although Diego López had lost his tenancy of Astorga, he received the valuable town of Toro in its place—a town that had previously been in the hands of Berenguela's partisan Rodrigo Pérez de Villalobos.⁴⁴

Alfonso IX's largesse to the Haro family was not limited to the Castilian border, however. Diego López had also been made co-tenant of Montenegro and Sarria, in Galicia.⁴⁵ His compatriot Gonzalo Núñez de Lara had received generous tenancies in Galicia too.⁴⁶ Alfonso IX's assiduous courtship of the highest-ranking Castilian nobility signals that tensions along the border remained high through 1205.

Alfonso VIII was campaigning in Gascoigne that fall. Shortly after his return, he was confronted by yet another threat from Innocent III. On March 2, 1206, the pope instructed the four leading prelates of Iberia to resolve “the business about certain castles that has arisen between our most dear children the king of León, on one side, and the king of Castile and his daughter on the other.”⁴⁷ Perhaps in response to this prompting, Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX sealed their first major treaty regarding Berenguela’s arras properties later the same month.

The Treaty of Cabrerros, 1206

The compromise that Castile and León reached on Palm Sunday 1206 is known as the Treaty of Cabrerros, after the town where it was issued. Cabrerros, in the Tierra de Campos, had been given to Berenguela in her 1199 arras, and the treaty itself demonstrates that she was still in possession there. In the treaty, in fact, Cabrerros is the only place that Berenguela holds entirely on her own authority, rather than in partnership with her father or former husband.⁴⁸ The fact that the treaty was made in a town that was under Berenguela’s sole lordship indicates that she played a considerable role in negotiating this peace.⁴⁹ The Treaty of Cabrerros does not make Berenguela’s role explicit; the peace it establishes is said to exist between Alfonso IX, on the one hand, and Alfonso VIII or his son and successor on the other, and only the kings are named in the corroboration. Nonetheless, Berenguela appears within the treaty as an independent lord and agent. And by serving as mediator between her father and Alfonso IX, she continued in the traditionally reginal duty of peacemaking that she had assumed during her marriage.⁵⁰ Technically, of course, Berenguela was no longer married, and no longer had any share in the interests of Alfonso IX and León. But in reality, her separation from Alfonso IX and his subsequent conflict with Castile had done little to change her position as mediator across the troubled border. For one thing, the treaty was designed to serve the advantage of her son Fernando, the presumptive heir to León, whose interests she did share. For another, despite the dissolution of her marriage and the pope’s insistence that she had as little claim to queenship as she did to her arras, Berenguela had not surrendered her married title. Alfonso IX had apparently accepted this, because the Treaty

of Cabrerros refers to her repeatedly as “the queen of León, doña Berenguela.”⁵¹

The peace outlined at Cabrerros depended on the surrender of all disputed border properties to Fernando, Berenguela’s son, then four and a half years old. The parties in the conflict—Alfonso VIII, Alfonso IX, and Berenguela herself—enumerated the castles and towns that they would turn over to Fernando, and agreed to safeguards to guarantee observance of the treaty. The properties that Alfonso VIII gave Fernando were almost the same ones he had awarded the infante in his 1204 will.⁵² Alfonso IX gave his son six castles that lay either on the Castilian-Leonese border, or on the line between the Leonese heartland and Asturias.⁵³ For her part, Berenguela removed her arras castles from the control of the tenants she had placed there, and—in conjunction with Alfonso IX—ceded the castles to Fernando. The arras properties listed in the treaty are nearly identical to the ones that Alfonso IX gave Berenguela in 1199, with four exceptions. No mention is made of the Galician castle of Candrei, the Asturian city of Oviedo, the Tierra de Campos town of Mansilla, or the city of Astorga, all of which were included in Berenguela’s arras in 1199. And among the Asturian arras properties that Berenguela gave her son is Tudela, which had not been given to her in 1199.

Clearly there had been changes in Berenguela’s arras since 1199. The surviving evidence suggests a transfer of power either late in Berenguela’s marriage or at its very end. Mansilla was held until early 1202 by one Pedro Rodríguez, who I suspect should be identified as the Pedro Rodríguez de Quiñones who was then tenant of the towers of León, another property of Berenguela’s. No surviving documents record a tenant in Mansilla after 1202, at least until Berenguela departed León. Then, from June 1204, Rodrigo Abril appears as tenant there.⁵⁴ Astorga was in the hands of Fernando García de Villamayor, the king’s Castilian majordomo, until at least mid-August 1202. After that, again, no tenant is listed for the city until it was awarded to Diego López de Haro in June 1204.⁵⁵ For Candrei, Oviedo, and Tudela, I have found no record of tenancies for this period. Such silences may indicate that the properties had returned to the crown’s direct possession, which itself implies Alfonso IX’s desire to safeguard them.

The provisions of the treaty were, however, far more complicated than these first few clauses suggest. For one thing, Infante Fernando was still a child, so the properties nominally ceded to him at Cabrerros would remain in his elders’ *de facto* power for many more years. For another, the surrender of

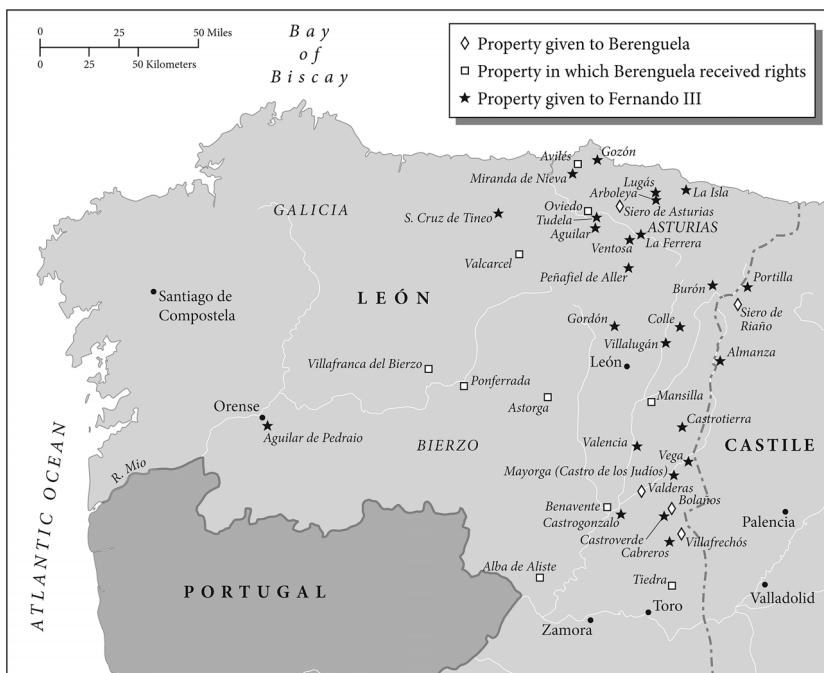


Figure 4. The Treaty of Cabreros, 1206.

Berenguela's arras castles as described in the treaty would have left her essentially destitute; she had no personal demesne within Castile that could remotely equal the thirty castles' worth of wealth that had been hers in León. It was necessary, then, to provide for her maintenance.

The treaty stated unequivocally that the castles given by Alfonso VIII, Alfonso IX, and Berenguela were to go to both Fernando and the Leonese crown:

And the grandson of the king of Castile, son of the king of León, is to have all of these castles . . . by right of inheritance forever. And furthermore, the king of León, his father, grants him his entire kingdom after his death; and he causes the kingdom to do homage to him for that purpose. All the aforementioned castles belong to the kingdom of León, but in such a way that the son of the king of León shall have them by right of inheritance, as it is stated above.⁵⁶

Yet Berenguela retained rights in some of these same castles. To compensate her for the loss of her arras, Alfonso IX promised her eight thousand maravedís a year for the rest of her life. She would receive two thousand maravedís a year from the rents of Bolaños, Siero de Asturias, Siero de Riaño, Valderas, and Villafrechós—five castles that Alfonso VIII had previously captured from León, and which he had promised to Infante Fernando both in his 1204 will and in the Treaty of Cabreros itself. Berenguela's two thousand maravedís represented the total annual rents of these castles, except for the comparatively modest sums that they owed to Alfonso IX as *yantar*, which he retained.⁵⁷ The queen received another four thousand maravedís out of the rents of Benavente, Villafranca, and Valcarcel, "just as Queen Teresa, daughter of the king of Portugal, received them." This curious provision suggests that Berenguela sought to encroach upon the Leonese rents of her rival, Alfonso IX's first wife.⁵⁸ However, Alfonso IX hedged. He would ensure that Berenguela received the four thousand maravedís; but they would not come out of Teresa's rents "until the four castles of Toroño are liberated."⁵⁹ Which Galician castles these were, and how Alfonso IX had lost control of them, is not specified; but it is possible that they were the four (excluding Candrei) that he had given to Berenguela as arras, and that she was now required to turn over to their son.

The remaining two thousand maravedís of Berenguela's yearly income would come from the collection of tolls (*portazgo*) in Astorga, Avilés, Mansilla, Oviedo, and Ponferrada. The cession of rents from three towns that had

been included in her 1199 arras charter but had not been named among her arras properties in this treaty—Astorga, Mansilla, and Oviedo—is noteworthy. Alfonso IX's concession of those towns' *portazgos* may be a nod to the larger rights that Berenguela had lost in them. Avilés is on the Asturian coast, but Ponferrada, like Villafranca, is in the Bierzo, not far from the Portuguese border. Berenguela seems to have been trying to establish a foothold in that region, where Teresa of Portugal had significant interests.

Alfonso IX put up eight castles as a guarantee that Berenguela would receive her eight thousand maravedís each year. By the terms of this treaty, four of them (Arboleya, La Ferrera, Gordón, and Luna) were castles that he had ceded to their son Fernando. Another, Castrotierra, had been given to Fernando by Alfonso VIII; and another, Alión, was one of Berenguela's arras castles, now also entrusted to Fernando by her and Alfonso IX. These six castles would be delivered to their noble tenants by Fernando's own porter.⁶⁰ The remaining two castles, Alba de Aliste and Tiedra, were also among those that Alfonso IX had given Fernando; but these two would be delivered to their tenants by Berenguela's porter. If Alfonso IX failed to give Berenguela her money and, after appropriate warnings and retribution, did not make amends within six months, then Tiedra and Alba de Aliste would become Berenguela's castles outright. Yet even at the time of the treaty, these eight castles could be referred to collectively as *todos estos sobrenombrados castellos de la reina dona Berenguela et de suo filio*, "all these aforesaid castles of Queen doña Berenguela and her son."⁶¹

Such provisions indicate the complicated web of power into which the castles were now woven. How much authority did Berenguela have in a place like Villafrechós, which nominally belonged to her son but whose rents went entirely to her? How much authority did she have in Tiedra and Alba de Aliste, where Fernando was lord but where Berenguela's own agent established and displaced tenants? And, perhaps most importantly, who would hold real power in each of these fiercely disputed properties until Fernando came of age?

The treaty itself, perhaps from necessity, does little to resolve these ambiguities. The tenants of the eight castles that guaranteed Berenguela's income had to become Fernando's vassals and do him homage before they could assume their tenancies; but they were also required to do homage to and become the vassals of Alfonso IX to guarantee that they would serve him and observe the treaty. They also did homage to Berenguela, to guarantee that they would obey her (*por cumplir todo suo pleito*) according to the treaty.

Finally, they did homage to both Alfonso IX and Alfonso VIII (or his son and successor) to guarantee that they would help keep the peace between Castile and León.

The tenants of the other castles assigned to Fernando faced a similar round of vassalage and homage. They had to become Fernando's vassals, but they also had to become Alfonso IX's vassals and do him homage as a guarantee that they would serve him according to the treaty. In addition, they had to do "homage to both kings and to Queen doña Berenguela that they will help keep the peace and the agreements of the kings and the queen as it is written above."⁶²

It appears, then, that during Fernando's minority, authority over the castles would belong principally to Alfonso IX. Yet even this is not as simple as it first seems. The treaty divided Fernando's castles into twenty-three that would be held by Castilian tenants and twenty that would be held by Leonese tenants. Each king had the right to appoint and replace his tenants as he pleased. Although the treaty specified the men who could be chosen as tenants, the right to select tenants freely from among that group meant that Alfonso VIII had considerably more direct authority over the Castilian-held castles than Alfonso IX did. What is more, the Castilian-held castles included almost every one of Fernando's new properties in the Tierra de Campos. Except for Vega and Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga, the Leonese-held castles were all located deeper in the kingdom, in Asturias and Galicia.⁶³ Castilian domination in the Tierra de Campos had only been redecorated, not redressed, by this treaty.

Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX therefore both held significant power over castles that were nominally Fernando's. Berenguela, on the other hand, seems to have lost direct authority over her arras. Now that her marriage had ended, she could no longer formally serve as the embodied peace between León and Castile, the place where the kingdoms' interests met. She might have kept her title as queen of León, but she was a Castilian now above all else, living in her father's kingdom. In her hands, her arras castles were dangerously within reach of Alfonso VIII. The Castilian-Leonese peace needed a different representative, and the task fell to Fernando—"the son of the king of León, grandson of the king of Castile," as the treaty calls him. He took on Berenguela's role as lord of the disputed castles and arbiter of the peace.

Yet Berenguela was as much a participant in this process as the kings were. Her ill-defined lordship over certain castles (like Tiedra and Alba de Aliste, or the five castles whose rents went almost entirely to her) is one

indication that her power had not been extinguished, despite the ostensible loss of her demesne. Even more important, the tenants of all her son's castles were required to do homage to her, just as they did to the kings and heirs-apparent of Castile and León. The treaty's framers saw her both as a figure to whom the castles' tenants owed service and obedience, and as someone who shared the kings' responsibility for upholding the peace. In this case, as in those of so many other medieval women, Berenguela's efforts to protect and increase her son's rights cannot be read as the sacrifice of her own power for his; they cannot even be considered disinterested.⁶⁴ In strengthening Fernando's position, she strengthened her own. This strategy would become increasingly well defined over the following years, as ongoing conflicts made necessary a series of revisions and rearticulations of the Treaty of Cabreros.

The Donation of Burgos, 1207

The Castilians were satisfied with the bargain they had made at Cabreros. Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, who had witnessed the treaty, later wrote of "the king of Castile prevailing in everything and occupying the greatest number of castles from the other's kingdom."⁶⁵ Not only that, but in the course of making peace with León, Alfonso VIII had also made peace with his old friend and recent enemy Diego López de Haro. From April 1206, Diego López appears in the king's diplomas as *alférez*, displacing Count Fernando Núñez de Lara.⁶⁶ Alfonso VIII had now managed to reconcile with both the Haro and the Castro families, and had thus brought two of his most powerful nobles back to Castile.

Nevertheless, the fall of 1207 brought revisions to the Treaty of Cabreros. Once again, they were in Castile's favor. This time, however, the advantage was specifically Berenguela's.

Alfonso IX came to Burgos in early September. The journey put him squarely in Castilian territory, which marks a departure from the usual practice of meeting in border towns and suggests that this agreement may not have been the result of an outright dispute. Certainly, it was not a treaty; it survives as a diploma issued by Alfonso IX, not as the record of a pact made jointly by the two kings, so the circumstances surrounding its production may have been more peaceable than border negotiations usually were. Besides, Burgos was currently home to Alfonso IX's children.

The oldest of Alfonso IX's and Berenguela's surviving children was no more than eight; the youngest was at most three. They had been living, or at least spending a great deal of time, at the royal monastery of Las Huelgas. In April 1207, a donation to Las Huelgas was witnessed by the Castilian royal family, including Alfonso VIII, his sons Fernando and Enrique, and Berenguela's sons, "Infante Fernando of León" and "Infante Alfonso of León."⁶⁷ In October 1207, another donation to the monastery "was made in the presence of Queen doña Leonor and in the presence of Queen doña Berenguela of León and in the presence of Infanta doña Urraca," Berenguela's sister. The charter was confirmed by "Infante don Fernando of León" and a few nobles and members of the royal household. In first place among the noble witnesses was a Leonese youth, Gonzalo Gómez de Traba; he had apparently been one of Alfonso IX's contributions to the proto-court of noble boys among whom a king's son was traditionally raised.⁶⁸

In September, then, when Alfonso IX came to Burgos, Berenguela probably met him there with some or all of their children.⁶⁹ The charter she received from him represents itself as a free and spontaneous gift: "I, Alfonso, by the grace of God king of León and Galicia, out of my generosity, give to doña Berenguela, queen of León, daughter of the illustrious king of Castile . . ."⁷⁰ Its terms, however, suggest either an expansion of Berenguela's authority in the Tierra de Campos beyond what had been specified at Cabrerros, or an official recognition that her authority there had never been as limited as the Treaty of Cabrerros suggests.

In the towns of Castrogonzalo, Castroverde, and Valencia, Alfonso IX granted Berenguela "all rents and all services" that were owed to the crown; the only regalian right that he reserved was that of coinage. The castles of these towns, too, were not delivered to Berenguela, since they fell under the terms of the Treaty of Cabrerros.⁷¹ By those terms, the castles belonged to Infante Fernando and were to be held for him by Castilian tenants⁷²—though, again, this formal division of power leaves open the question of who would really control those tenancies. The diploma hints that Berenguela would have *de facto* authority over the castles:

And I concede all this to the vassals and absolve them of it, so that in all these aforesaid things they shall have to answer only to Queen doña Berenguela, and not to me, for as long as the queen lives, except for the fulfillment of the things that are set out in the charter



Figure 5. The Donation of Burgos, 1207.

of peace [the Treaty of Cabrerros], in which it is stated that [they] must answer to me.⁷³

The “vassals” (*fideles*) may be the residents of the three towns. But the Treaty of Cabrerros enumerates the duties owed to Alfonso IX by the castles’ tenants, not by the townspeople. So the vassals referred to here seem to be, or include, the tenants of these castles, who in everyday matters must “answer only to Queen doña Berenguela.”

The diploma goes on to list a long series of new rents that Berenguela would collect from various Leonese towns, most of them along the border and in the Tierra de Campos.⁷⁴ She received half of the royal *pedido* from Alba de Aliste, Almanza, Arboleya, Cabrerros, Gordón, Luna, Peñafiel, Portilla, Tiedra, and Villalugán. She also received the *portazgo* of San Martín de las Torres, which amounted to 1,250 maravedís a year, along with 300 maravedís in additional rents from Pozuelo (de la Orden)⁷⁵ and Burón. Finally, Alfonso IX gave her the 60 maravedís in *yantar* from Valderas and Villafrechós, the 50 from Bolaños, and the 30 from Siero de Riaño that he had reserved for himself in the Treaty of Cabrerros, making Berenguela the sole recipient of those towns’ entire royal rents.⁷⁶

To guarantee Berenguela’s receipt of the 1,550 maravedís owed her from Burón, Pozuelo, and San Martín de las Torres, Alfonso IX put up the castles of Burón and Pozuelo themselves, along with the castle of San Pedro de Latarce. If Alfonso IX failed to give Berenguela the amount he owed, he would lose those three castles to her. As surety, the castles were handed over to specified tenants, who received them from Berenguela’s porter. The tenants were also required to do homage to Alfonso IX and to Berenguela as assurance that they would observe the diploma’s terms, which included yielding the castles to Alfonso IX after Berenguela’s death, or to Infante Fernando once both his parents were deceased.

The diploma specified the ten men who might be chosen as tenants. Not all of them can be identified with certainty, but the eight who can are all Castilians, and were nearly all named as potential tenants for Alfonso VIII in the Treaty of Cabrerros.⁷⁷ In other words, Alfonso IX was putting a fresh set of castles into Castilian hands. Under the Treaty of Cabrerros, Burón should have been held by a Leonese tenant.⁷⁸ The status of Pozuelo and San Pedro de Latarce had not been addressed in that treaty, and, unlike Burón, they had never been part of Berenguela’s arras; this makes their transfer to Castilian control in 1207 even more surprising.

Berenguela now held outright Bolaños, Castrogonzalo, Castroverde, Siero de Asturias, Siero de Riaño, Valderas, Valencia, and Villafrechós; had considerable rights in Alba de Aliste, Burón, Pozuelo, San Pedro de Latarce, and Tiedra; and was collecting rents from numerous other towns. She was being richly compensated for the loss of her arras, both in monetary terms and in the construction of a new demesne in the Tierra de Campos and along the border. Still, the apparently mild atmosphere surrounding the Donation of Burgos could not endure forever. The increasing Castilian presence in Leonese lands inevitably sparked resentment.

The Treaty of Valladolid, 1209

Around the beginning of June 1208, the Galician castle of San Pelayo de Lodo was given to the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela. San Pelayo de Lodo had been part of Berenguela's arras in 1199 and had been transferred to Fernando, under a Leonese tenant, in the Treaty of Cabrerros. Considering its volatile history, the archbishop viewed its peaceful handover to him as little short of a miracle:

At the same time [June 1, 1208] don Pedro IV, archbishop of Compostela, acquired the castle of San Pelayo de Lodo from the hands of the king of Castile and his daughter Queen doña Berenguela, and of don Alfonso, the king of León. And we believe that this was done solely through the grace of blessed [St.] James, for that castle was given to the queen as her marriage portion, and although the afore-said monarchs are in disagreement about other things, they agreed on this donation through the intervention of the apostle.⁷⁹

The archbishop's pious astonishment testifies to the endurance and ferocity of the debate over Berenguela's arras. For one thing, it suggests that both Alfonso VIII and Berenguela exercised considerable authority over those of Fernando's castles that were nominally under Leonese control. The archbishop is said to have received San Pelayo de Lodo from all three monarchs; but Alfonso IX comes last in the list, even though he should reasonably be the principal actor in the donation of a Leonese castle, held by a Leonese tenant, to a Leonese prelate. For another, the monarchs of León and Castile,

even during this harmonious act, are said to be “in disagreement about other things.” Those “other things” were located on the border.

The Castilian tenants who held Leonese castles under the terms established at Cabrerros and Burgos had used their authority to build additional castles within the jurisdictions of their tenancies. The problem was apparently widespread; castles had gone up near towns held by Berenguela, on the border, but also near Infante Fernando’s strongholds, which were distributed throughout the kingdom. Some had even been built in Galicia.⁸⁰ The *Anales toledanos* record one of the resulting conflicts: in early 1209, Count Fernando Núñez de Lara and his brother Álvaro Núñez had fought and defeated six Leonese municipal militias.⁸¹ To restore the peace, Alfonso VIII, Alfonso IX, and Berenguela met that June in Valladolid and sealed a new treaty.

The Treaty of Valladolid presents the clearest evidence yet of Berenguela’s crucial role in negotiations between Castile and León. Like Cabrerros in 1206, Valladolid was her town by 1209. In February 1208, an agreement between the abbot and chapter of the collegiate church of Valladolid had been witnessed by one García Pérez, identified as “the merino of the queen of León.”⁸² The “queen of León,” of course, was Berenguela. The merino of a royal town such as Valladolid was appointed by the king, or by the magnate who held that town on the king’s behalf. The fact that Berenguela had appointed Valladolid’s merino indicates that the town was under her dominion.⁸³ This was a remarkable gift; Valladolid was an economically and strategically valuable border town, a possession no monarch would surrender lightly.⁸⁴ There are, however, two reasons why Alfonso VIII might have placed Valladolid in his oldest daughter’s hands. One is that Valladolid had been granted to queens and infantas during the twelfth century, so that there was ample precedent for Berenguela’s lordship there.⁸⁵ The other is that the decision dovetailed with Alfonso VIII’s other strategies for constructing and protecting Berenguela’s authority on the border. It was common for the crown to bestow the tenancy of a royal town on individuals with a strong patrimonial power base in the same region.⁸⁶ Alfonso VIII granted Valladolid to Berenguela according to a similar principle: his gift consolidated and confirmed her position on the border. Decades later, in England, Berenguela’s granddaughter Eleanor of Castile sought to create a similarly centralized domain through gift and purchase to maximize her opportunities for patronage.⁸⁷ For Berenguela, too, the geographical cohesion of her lands in the Tierra de Campos confirmed her metaphorical authority as mediator between the kingdoms.

Certainly, Valladolid's selection as a meeting site was due in part to practicality; it stood on the two kingdoms' shared border, at the southern limit of the Tierra de Campos. However, the choice was also governed by the larger considerations that had led to the sealing of an earlier treaty at Cabrerros. Berenguela's border possessions were, in several senses, a kind of no-man's-land in the contest between Castile and León. Their location made them obvious places for the two courts to meet, but the fact that they were under Berenguela's dominion gave them a certain neutrality. As Alfonso VIII's daughter and the mother of Alfonso IX's putative heirs, Berenguela continued to share the interests of both León and Castile. She was an ideal arbiter, positioned both metaphorically and physically between the two kingdoms by virtue of her border properties. Her towns were therefore the best sites for negotiation, places in which Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX could meet on a more or less equal footing. But they were also places where she could most freely assert her own authority.

The Treaty of Valladolid claims, at the outset, to be an agreement solely between Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX: "This is the form of the peace that is established between us, Alfonso king of Castile and Alfonso king of León."⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Berenguela is its focus, and it is quickly evident that she was no mere onlooker.

Alfonso IX gave "to doña Berenguela, queen of León, your daughter" the towns of Ardón, Rueda, and Villalpando, all located in the Tierra de Campos. Villalpando had been specifically reserved for the crown in Berenguela's 1199 arras diploma;⁸⁹ now, though, it and the two other towns were ceded to Berenguela for life, with all their rights and rents except for half the proceeds of their *yantar*, the regalian right of coinage, and some control over the tenancies of any fortresses subsequently built within the towns' jurisdiction.⁹⁰ In every other respect, Berenguela was the *domina* of these towns:

the queen as well as my children must hold the said towns or fortresses in such a way that no harm or warfare ever comes to me or my kingdom either from them or from their lands or from the places under their jurisdiction [*alfoces*], unless I withhold from Queen doña B[erenguela] the maravedís that I gave her, or any of these three towns or fortresses. . . . And so that all that has been said here may be faithfully observed, Queen doña B[erenguela] concedes to me, in good faith and without deceit, that she will observe it and cause it

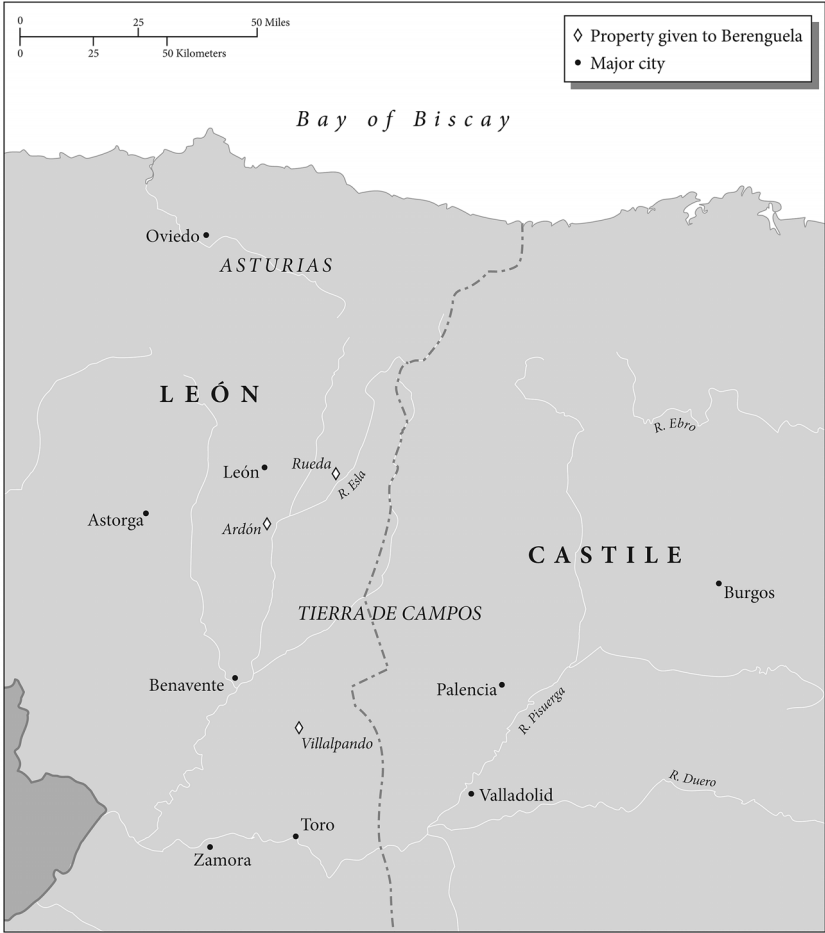


Figure 6. The Treaty of Valladolid, 1209.

to be observed by those who hold the aforesaid towns or fortresses from her or from her children.⁹¹

Berenguela's lordship over the three towns and their tenants is fully recognized here. It is a lordship subordinate to Alfonso IX, as her lordship in León had always been; but in this treaty at least, that subordination places few restrictions on her authority except to forbid her from using these properties to attack Alfonso IX or his kingdom.⁹² The treaty adds that when Berenguela changes the tenants of these properties, each new tenant must do homage to Alfonso IX to guarantee that he will obey this injunction. But this is only a safeguard, meant to back up Berenguela's own promise to do the same thing. In fact, this clause reveals the breadth rather than the limits of Berenguela's authority; she would be free to choose and change her tenants in these towns at will. Unlike earlier pacts, the Treaty of Valladolid does not even restrict her choice of tenants to a preapproved list.

The passage cited above demonstrates another important point. The extant documents leave no doubt that some of the castles named in peace treaties changed hands between one treaty and the next, in transactions that are now unrecorded. Alfonso IX's repeated cessions of land and rents to Berenguela might suggest that each new pact was issued to replace lands and rents that Berenguela had lost since the last pact. In the Treaty of Valladolid, this is clearly not the case. The maravedís that Alfonso IX had given Berenguela, and whose delivery was to be guaranteed in part by her possession of Ardón, Rueda, and Villalpando, were the maravedís that he assigned to her in the Donation of Burgos. She received these towns as an addition to her demesne, not as a restoration of it. Indeed, the treaty itself goes on to declare that both kings must continue to observe the terms of their agreement at Cabrerros.

After Berenguela's rights over the three towns had been enumerated, her father approved the terms for her: "And I, A[lfonso], king of Castile, concede all that is said above as it is contained above, and by this I am satisfied on behalf of my daughter, Queen doña B[erenguela]." In spite of her previous agency (for example, she "conceded" to Alfonso IX that she would observe the treaty's terms), Berenguela is now silenced again. Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX went on to promise an enduring mutual friendship and peace. Both kings then corroborated the treaty—"And we kings both concede and swear that we will faithfully observe, and cause to be observed, everything that is contained in this charter as it is stated above"—as they would have corroborated any treaty or indeed any diploma. Then, however, Berenguela added a

corroboration of her own: “And I, Queen doña B[erenguela], concede what is stated above between me and don A[lfonso], king of León, and promise in good faith that I will observe it and cause it to be observed.”⁹³ In the original treaty, preserved in the cathedral archive of León, this sentence appears to have been added belatedly. The scribe had already written out the sanctions and dating formula that would normally conclude a diploma; the *signos rodados* of Castile and León had been drawn too, and the Castilian witnesses had been listed to the left of Alfonso VIII’s *signo*. Berenguela’s corroboration therefore had to be crammed into the remaining space around the *signos*, with a line drawn to separate it from the Castilian witness list. Does this placement represent an error—had the scribe simply forgotten to include the sentence in its proper place, compelling him to fit it in wherever he could? Or is it evidence that Berenguela’s corroboration had not been thought necessary, until the Castilians (and possibly the queen herself) insisted on adding it at the last minute?

It was not customary for queens to corroborate the acts of their fathers or husbands, and certainly not in their own voices. Berenguela herself had not done this during her marriage to Alfonso IX. And Berenguela probably also attached her own seal to the Treaty of Valladolid, along with those of her father and former husband; the document originally had three hanging seals, all of which are now lost. Thus she once again employed her personal seal on a diploma co-issued with—or, in this case, issued by—her male relatives.⁹⁴ Taken together, her seal and her corroboration on the Treaty of Valladolid indicate that she acted independently in the agreement between herself and Alfonso IX regarding Ardón, Rueda, and Villalpando. Her father’s approval may have been necessary to finalize that agreement, but Berenguela bore full responsibility for carrying it out. The treaty openly recognized and ratified her lordship and authority over her newly expanded border demesne.

Once again, Berenguela had served as the agent of peace between León and Castile, in a process that simultaneously enhanced her personal power. Once again, too, the peace she represented could not last long. But the border dispute between Castile and León now became entangled in far larger conflicts, fought among kingdoms and empires.

The End of an Era

The years between 1209 and 1214 were tumultuous in Iberia. A succession crisis loomed in Portugal, sparking a succession crisis in León. Alfonso VIII

summoned his neighbors to a great crusade that would turn the tide of the Reconquista. Christian armies moved back and forth across the Castilian-Leonese border, sometimes as allies but more often as foes. And by the end of 1214, death had reaped a harvest of princes across Iberia, permanently altering the landscape of power and thrusting Berenguela abruptly out of her none-too-quiet personal demesne and back onto the sovereign stage. The rights and power that she and Alfonso VIII had fought to build for her over the last decade, and which they were still fighting to keep, gave her a base of authority from which she could step into her new role—but that step, even then, was very shaky.

The Portuguese Succession

For the rest of 1209 and 1210, relations between Castile and León remained friendly. Castilian nobles again began to appear at the court of León, but far from being in disgrace with their own king, they represented some of the families he was honoring most highly. Gonzalo Núñez de Lara, for example, was at Alfonso IX's court in February 1210 to negotiate an exchange of property between his family and the king; at the same time, his brother Álvaro Núñez was serving as Alfonso VIII's *alférez*, and his brother Count Fernando Núñez was confirming Castilian diplomas in fourth place.⁹⁵ This was also the moment when Alfonso IX first welcomed his half-brother Sancho Fernández into his court. Sancho, now about twenty-two years old, was the son of Fernando II of León and his third wife, the Castilian Urraca López de Haro. His uncle Diego López de Haro, Alfonso VIII's close friend, was still in that king's good graces and confirming his diplomas in third place.

This camaraderie vanished after Sancho I of Portugal died in late March 1211. In his will, Sancho I left his daughters a wealth of property—a wealth that his son and heir, Afonso II, wanted for the crown. The conflict between Afonso II and his sisters rapidly carried over into León, because one of the new king's sisters was Teresa of Portugal, Alfonso IX's first wife. She and her supporters sought an alliance with Alfonso IX, and received it.⁹⁶

An alliance with Teresa of Portugal, of course, was anathema to Alfonso IX's alliance with Castile. He therefore threw over the terms of every pact he had made with Castile since 1199, and welcomed not only Teresa but also their son, Fernando, into León. From April 1211, Alfonso IX was co-issuing diplomas with, and having them confirmed by, "Infante Fernando, the king's

firstborn son.”⁹⁷ This was Castile’s nightmare—an overt rejection of Berenguela’s son Fernando, and his replacement as heir-presumptive by Teresa’s equally illegitimate and much older son. Teresa’s Fernando was about nineteen in 1211, fully adult, “an extremely handsome youth,”⁹⁸ and an appealing prospective king; Berenguela’s Fernando, by contrast, was not yet ten.

The consequent rupture between Castile and León was complete. The Castilians who had been in attendance at the Leonese court fled, along with Berenguela’s old client Rodrigo Pérez de Villalobos; ominously, their place was taken by Pedro Fernández de Castro, Alfonso VIII’s longtime enemy, whose brief reunion with his king in 1206 had ended in another exile.⁹⁹ And, in addition to disregarding his vows to make Berenguela’s son the heir to León, which he had repeated regularly ever since the Treaty of Cabreros, Alfonso IX began trying to recover the properties that he had given to Berenguela herself. In April 1211, only a month after Sancho I’s death, Alfonso IX promised the Knights Templar that he would grant them the castles of Alba de Aliste and San Pedro de Latarece—which he had entrusted to Berenguela and her tenants under the Treaty of Cabreros and the Donation of Burgos respectively—once he recovered them. “And if the brothers of the Temple are able to acquire them in any way, that will please me greatly.”¹⁰⁰

However, neither Castile nor León was in a position to turn its hostility into outright warfare; both were expending their military energies elsewhere. Alfonso IX was preparing to invade Portugal in defense of Teresa’s rights, and Alfonso VIII was gathering forces for a tremendous new crusade. So unprepared was he to deal with possible assaults from León that he appealed to the pope for protection. In early April 1212, Innocent III enjoined the archbishops of Toledo and Compostela to see that the kings of Iberia remained at peace with each other—and to keep a particularly close eye on the king of León.¹⁰¹ As it turned out, the warning was not unnecessary.

“Under the Queen’s Hand”

In the spring of 1212 Alfonso VIII gathered an army in Toledo. His call for a grand crusade against the Almohads had been answered by the kings of Aragón-Cataluña and Navarre, as well as by nobles and prelates from Portugal, southern France, and León. He had appealed to Alfonso IX, too, but had been turned down.¹⁰²

Lucas of Tuy reports that Alfonso VIII “received consolation from the multitude of gathering armies, even though he was sick at heart from the death of [his] son.”¹⁰³ In October 1211, Alfonso VIII’s elder son and heir, twenty-two-year-old Fernando, had died of a fever in Madrid. The blow left both his parents prostrate with grief.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, Berenguela had to step for the first time into the traditionally female role of chief mourner and caretaker of the dead.¹⁰⁵ Leaving her parents and their friend Diego López de Haro in the Castilian Transierra, where Alfonso VIII had been readying an earlier campaign against the Almohads, Berenguela accompanied Fernando’s body to Burgos for burial at the monastery of Las Huelgas.¹⁰⁶ The occasion affords Archbishop Rodrigo, who was with her, an opportunity to praise her at length for the first time:

his [Fernando’s] most excellent sister, Queen Berenguela . . . devoted herself to everything that was required for the funeral and the honors, for the mourning and sorrow, with largesse and propriety. In this, the fullness of her virtues shone in such a way that her wisdom [*prudencia*] surpassed the piety of the devout sex and the generosity of her alms surpassed the generosity of princes. Likewise, the chaste modesty of her decorum urged comfort for inconsolable grief, so that the sweet charm for which she was known grew sweeter and more intense.¹⁰⁷

Rodrigo’s praise is a boilerplate of medieval feminine virtues—piety, modesty, sweetness, and generosity to the poor. Yet it only partly conceals the fact that Berenguela had essentially been entrusted with the royal treasury. A royal funeral cost enormous sums; hence Rodrigo’s references to Berenguela’s “largesse” and “generosity,” much of which would have been directed not to the secular poor but to religious institutions such as Las Huelgas, where Fernando was buried. During a time of family crisis, her parents had assigned her the task not only of managing finances—an even more critical concern on the eve of a costly southern campaign—but also of managing the complex obligations of royal propriety and dignity, by determining how much to spend and where to spend it.

After the funeral, Berenguela returned south to join her parents in Guadalajara, and accompanied them on the first legs of her father’s campaign;¹⁰⁸ Alfonso VIII was already seeking solace in battle. But his expedition of November 1211 was only a prelude to the crusade for which he assembled armies

at Toledo the following spring. In mid-July 1212, Alfonso VIII and his Iberian allies met a vastly superior Almohad force at Las Navas de Tolosa, and defeated them in a rout so total that it is now considered the turning point of the Reconquista. News of the victory prompted celebrations both in Iberia and abroad; after Alfonso VIII wrote a report of the battle to Innocent III, the pope proclaimed a solemn procession and feast in Rome to give thanks for what was generally considered a miraculous success.¹⁰⁹

Despite Alfonso VIII's triumph, however, all was not well within Castile. As the crusading army headed south, Alfonso IX—with the assistance of Pedro Fernández de Castro—had attacked and taken a number of disputed border castles, including Alba de Aliste, Alión, Arboleya, Ardón, Castrogonzalo, Castrotierra, Gordón, Luna, Rueda, and Villalugán.¹¹⁰ Berenguela had rights in most of these castles, and was in outright possession of others: of Alba de Aliste under the Treaty of Cabrerros, of Castrogonzalo under the Donation of Burgos, and of Ardón and Rueda under the Treaty of Valladolid. The assaults were therefore not simply Alfonso IX's bid to regain control over castles whose Castilian tenants had gotten out of hand;¹¹¹ they were a disavowal of his agreements with Berenguela and an encroachment on her personal demesne. In the tense atmosphere that surrounded Alfonso IX's elevation of Teresa's son Fernando as his heir, this was a gravely provocative act.

However, Alfonso IX had struck at the moment when Alfonso VIII was least able to retaliate. The Castilian king's army had been ravaged by disease as it returned home from Las Navas, and was in no condition to launch a fresh campaign against León.¹¹² Instead, Alfonso VIII negotiated a temporary peace, to last until the first of May, 1213. This agreement, known as the Treaty of Coimbra, included Afonso II of Portugal and his sister Teresa, whose dispute over their father's will had been the catalyst for the latest fighting between Castile and León.¹¹³

However limited, the Treaty of Coimbra had its desired effect. Another strained peace held between León and Castile through the winter of 1212–1213; that spring, before the truce could expire, the two kings came to terms again. Alfonso VIII was planning a new campaign against the Almohads, and could not afford to fight a secondary war with León at the same time. The result was an agreement that, for once, favored León rather than Castile. Alfonso VIII conceded to his former son-in-law the castles that Alfonso IX had reclaimed during the 1212 campaign, some of them (Arboleya, Gordón, and perhaps Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga) on the condition that they be

destroyed. Carpio and Monreal, which Alfonso IX had not managed to capture in 1212, were also handed over for destruction. Finally, Alfonso VIII ceded other border castles that were still in his possession: Colle and Peñafiel in Somoza, Miranda de Nieva in Asturias (all three of which had once been part of Berenguela's arras), and Almanza in the Tierra de Campos.¹¹⁴

Castile had consented not only to a reduction of its overall power on the border, but also to a significant contraction of Berenguela's personal demesne. She had lost more than a quarter of the property that she had held in León after the Treaty of Valladolid: four of the thirteen castles that she had possessed outright, along with six of the twenty in which she had had rents. While the losses were not enough to impoverish her, they did mean a sizable reduction in her income; and worse than the loss of money was the loss of stature. Her Leonese possessions and those of her son Fernando had both been diminished, and that was a bad omen for any future succession contest between young Fernando and his older half-brother.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the new alliance between Castile and León seems to have required Alfonso IX to stop flaunting his firstborn son as heir; the elder Fernando co-issued diplomas with his father during the beginning of the year, but ceased after April, around the time that Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX made peace.¹¹⁶ It is likely, in fact, that Alfonso VIII's conciliation of León was an effort to get the Castilians, and with them Berenguela's son, back into Alfonso IX's good graces, so as to nullify the threat posed by Teresa's Fernando.¹¹⁷ Alfonso IX's military successes and his rapprochement with Teresa's Portuguese partisans had made it impossible for Castile to continue dictating terms; genuine negotiation, and therefore concessions, had become inevitable.

It may be an accident of documentary survival, but the period from 1211 to 1214, when Berenguela's power in León was most at risk, is also the period for which the most direct evidence of her dominance in her border towns survives. The dating formulas of individual charters in Valencia (an arras property, returned to Berenguela in the Donation of Burgos) and Rueda and Villalpando (given her in the Treaty of Valladolid) repeatedly acknowledge her authority there during those years.

The term used most commonly in charters to refer to a royal tenant is *tenens*, "holding," although scribes sometimes identify tenants as *dominans*, "dominating," or *principans*, "ruling over." In the examples we have, Berenguela's lordship is distinguished from that of noble tenants in two ways. First, she is always accorded the title of queen. Second, *tenens* is never used to describe her lordship. In Rueda and Valencia, she is said to be *dominans* or

possidens, “possessing”; in Villalpando, she is *existens domina*, “being the *domina* of.”¹¹⁸ Some of these documents were, of course, written by the same scribe or on the same day, which partly accounts for their uniformity. Nevertheless, their choice of words indicates that Berenguela’s lordship in these towns was superior to that of most royal tenants. In fact, some charters refer to tenants who held the towns on her behalf. In Villalpando, Berenguela’s tenant (he held the town *sub manu eius*, “under her hand”) from 1211 to 1213 was García Ordóñez. At least one charter acknowledges that Berenguela technically held Villalpando along with her son Fernando, but it is a rare case.¹¹⁹ In August 1211, Berenguela’s role as *dominans* in Rueda was distinguished from that of her tenant, Abril García, who was merely *tenens*.¹²⁰ In July 1214, her tenant in Valencia (again *sub manu eius*) was one Gonzalo Rodríguez, probably her father’s majordomo Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón, for whom the charter was made; he and his wife Teresa Pérez were purchasing property within Valencia’s jurisdiction.¹²¹

The charters’ language and reference to Berenguela’s tenants paint a clearer picture of her lordship within the towns Alfonso IX had given her. That she should be recognized as *domina* of Villalpando and Rueda, even to the extent of naming tenants there, is not surprising; Alfonso IX had given her those towns outright in the Treaty of Valladolid. But she held very similar, if not identical, authority in Valencia, and that authority exceeded the limits that Alfonso IX had set when he gave her the town in the Donation of Burgos. Under that agreement, Berenguela had received all regalian rights in Valencia except for control over the tenancy of its castle, which according to the Treaty of Cabreros belonged to a Castilian tenant under the authority of her son.¹²² Admittedly, even the Donation of Burgos had hinted that Berenguela would appoint tenants and that their first loyalty would be to her. Nevertheless, these charters show that she was appointing her own men to the tenancies of both Valencia and the castle of Mota, which was within Valencia’s jurisdiction.¹²³ She was also doing this in Castroverde, which she had received under the same terms in 1207; one Muño Rodríguez, who appears as tenant there from 1208 on, is identified in 1212 as holding the town “from the hand of Queen doña Berenguela.”¹²⁴ If she had achieved this kind of lordship in Castroverde and Valencia, it is likely that she held similar power in towns like Bolaños and Villafrechós, which her father had given to her in the Treaty of Cabreros. Berenguela’s authority along the Castilian-Leonese border—especially in the Tierra de Campos, where these towns were located—was real, direct, and extensive even after her marriage had been

dissolved, even after the endless conflicts between her father and former husband, and even after the threat and turmoil of the years between 1211 and 1214. And it was about to prove invaluable to her, as a series of chance events overturned the structure of power in both kingdoms, and propelled the “queen of León” to the very steps of the Castilian throne.

The Death of Kings

The year 1214 was a dangerous one for the great men of Iberia. Its first casualty was Alfonso IX’s firstborn son; the elder Fernando, who had recently been enjoying the status of heir-apparent in León, died at twenty-two. The surviving chronicles take little notice of the event. Only Lucas of Tuy notes that “The king of León grieved profoundly for his death.” Alfonso IX buried his son in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela,¹²⁵ where his own father had been interred, thus honoring Fernando with a place in the pantheon of Leonese royalty.

The death of Teresa’s son considerably brightened the prospects of Berenguela’s Fernando; he was now his father’s oldest living son. Yet the Castilians had little time to act on their advantage, for the shadow was falling across their doors too.

In mid-September, the Castilian magnate Diego López de Haro died. His loss was a shattering blow to Alfonso VIII:

he [Alfonso VIII] had intended to entrust his kingdom and his son, who had not yet reached puberty, and his wife and daughters to the loyalty of that noble and faithful vassal, and to leave everything at his command and power, in full confidence that he would tend to everything faithfully. . . . Frustrated therefore in such a great hope . . . the glorious king grieved beyond measure.¹²⁶

The king’s grief was all the deeper because he himself was entering upon his last illness. The death of the man whom he had expected to serve as regent for his son Enrique, then only ten years old, removed any sense of security about the future of his family and his kingdom. There was evidently no magnate whom Alfonso VIII trusted to take Diego López’s place. The regent he now chose for Enrique was his wife, Leonor. In a matter of weeks, the

Castilian monarchy thereby made the tremendous leap from noble to queenly regency.¹²⁷

The decision had to be made quickly, for by the beginning of October Alfonso VIII was dying. On October 4, he confessed to and received the last rites from Archbishop Rodrigo. The following night, near midnight, he died, in the presence of “his most beloved wife Leonor, his most cherished daughter Queen Berenguela,” his son Enrique, his daughter Leonor, and his grandsons, Berenguela’s children Fernando and Alfonso, still boys of thirteen and about ten.¹²⁸

The balance of power between Castile and León was entirely overturned. With the death of his oldest son, Alfonso IX’s plans for the Leonese succession had again come into question—a question that centered on his relationship with Castile. But Castile was now virtually headless, its successful and experienced king replaced by a child, and its strength replaced by the uncertainty and disunity that always attended a regency. In the days after Alfonso VIII’s death, it was Berenguela who had to shoulder her family’s responsibilities. That informal role would shortly and dramatically become official.

Her father had left her a valuable gift, however. With his strength behind her, Berenguela had emerged from the potentially disastrous dissolution of her marriage as a still-viable power on the Castilian-Leonese border. Her lordship there was nothing like it had been in the days when she ruled in León, but it was far from insignificant, and she worked steadily to expand it—winning valuable concessions from Alfonso IX in 1207 and 1209, and gradually overstepping the limits that she had agreed to set on her power, as when she began to appoint her own tenants in towns like Valencia. Alfonso VIII had assisted her with diplomatic skill, military might, and rich gifts of his own, including the town of Valladolid. By handing out the often-wealthy tenancies she commanded, Berenguela was able to create bonds of loyalty and patronage with powerful Castilian magnates. As Castile’s plural monarchy reshaped itself around a king who was only a boy, the presence—and absence—of these bonds would determine Berenguela’s place at court.

Chapter 4

A Failed Regency, 1214–1217

Alfonso VIII's death left Castile in the hands of his only surviving son, Enrique, who was just ten years old. The power that came with custody of an underage monarch ensured that most such regencies were turbulent, scarred by conflicts among noble factions and members of the royal house. The increasing tendency of European royalty to delegate the regency to the boy king's mother was meant to forestall such conflicts; the queen-mother's natural affection was thought to ensure that she would govern in her son's best interest.¹ This trend toward female regency meant that royal women had access, at least occasionally, to a scope of publicly acknowledged authority that they could rarely otherwise obtain.² It also limited participation in the monarchy to the royal family, rather than blurring the boundaries between crown and nobility by placing royal authority in the hands of a magnate.

Yet a queen's regency was still a regency, and it posed nearly as many problems as noble regency did. To the medieval mind, the weakness of a kingdom headed by a child was scarcely, if at all, alleviated by appointing a woman to govern for him. The very factors that made it difficult for a queen to seize power herself—namely, her gender and the corresponding assumption that she was incapable of ruling like a king—also made it temptingly easy for men to seize power from her. The regency might offer royal women more authority than they could attain otherwise, but it was an authority constantly under threat.

Queen Leonor's considerable standing in Castile might have done much to buttress the queen-regent's dubious authority. But by the time Alfonso VIII died, Leonor had also fallen ill. Although she was present at her husband's funeral, it was Berenguela who oversaw the preparations for the event.³ Archbishop Rodrigo, the chief officiant at the king's burial mass in Burgos,

records her as her father's principal mourner; he wrote that as the funeral ended, Berenguela "nearly killed herself by tearing at her body and weeping."⁴ Leonor's role goes unmentioned.

The obsequies had proven too much for the aging queen: "when the glorious king's body had been magnificently and honorably interred, his noble wife, Queen doña Leonor, bereft of the solace of so great a husband and longing to die because of grief and anguish of spirit, fell at once into her sickbed."⁵ She had already been ill when Alfonso VIII died. But, given the mutual affection that seems to have characterized her marriage, one can sympathize with Juan of Osma's belief that she was also weakened by grief. Near midnight on October 31, just three weeks after Alfonso's death, Leonor followed her husband.

She left the regency to Berenguela. It would prove one of the greatest challenges of Berenguela's career; it was certainly the greatest failure. The Castilian magnates, dissatisfied with this new configuration of the crown, sought to reshape the monarchy to their own advantage. In Berenguela they saw a figurehead, not a ruler: one who had no real authority and thus no hope of withstanding their demands. And to an extent, they were right. Berenguela's early efforts to marshal her allies and resources came to nothing in the face of staunch noble opposition, and she was forced to cede the regency and retire from the field.

Her defeat is not surprising. Even her redoubtable grandmother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, had been driven from the arena of power when her schemes on behalf of her sons had failed. What *is* surprising was that when her opponents later made a critical misstep, Berenguela was able to regain the power she had lost. Summoning the possessions and alliances she had already established for herself in the Tierra de Campos, she confronted her enemies again—and this time, despite overwhelming obstacles, she triumphed. Her victory was as decisive as it had been unlikely. Without it, her future achievements would have been impossible; for when in crisis she would resort, again and again, to the strategies that had brought her success in 1217. What they were, and how she employed them, will be the focus of this chapter.

The Queen-Regent

The small court in Burgos must have been bewildered. The deaths of Alfonso VIII and Leonor, coming so unexpectedly and so swiftly, had left the kingdom headless twice over. But Queen Leonor had had time to appoint a

successor for her abbreviated regency, and she had chosen Berenguela. On November 18, the executors of Alfonso VIII's will—Archbishop Rodrigo, Bishop Tello Téllez de Meneses of Palencia, Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón, and the abbess of San Andrés de Arroyo—attested that Leonor, “before she died, entrusted her powers to doña Berenguela, the queen of León, her daughter, in regard to the kingdom and the custody of the little king, don Enrique, as well as in regard to everything else that was in her charge.”⁶ Another charter issued by the same executors in November or December of 1214 declares that they acted “with the counsel of doña Berenguela, queen of León and Galicia, to whom her mother, Queen doña Leonor, bequeathed kingdom and son and all the rights to the kingdom, just as the lord king of blessed memory bequeathed them to that same Queen Leonor.”⁷ Yet the very fact that these early documents place such emphasis on the delegation of the regency, from Alfonso to Leonor and from Leonor to Berenguela, suggests that Berenguela's authority was not secure.

Its scope and limitations can be surmised from a different charter issued by Alfonso VIII's executors, also on November 18. They restored to the see of Palencia half of the exactions that Alfonso VIII had claimed from Palencia and its vassals, acting “with the approbation and consent of doña Berenguela, queen of León.”⁸ This formula acknowledged that Berenguela had authority over the distribution of royal property. Of course, her authority was not absolute. The following day, Enrique issued a diploma to confirm the executors' decision, and, as usual in his diplomas, Berenguela was not mentioned.⁹ Her absence from Enrique's diplomas is not unusual; Alfonso VIII's regents also generally went unnamed in his early diplomas, even in those issued when he was only four or five years old.¹⁰ Rather, these two documents together suggest that Berenguela made decisions in close consultation with the noble and ecclesiastical advisors who had served her father, and that these decisions were then confirmed in diplomas that bore Enrique's name and seal.

According to the CLRC, after Leonor died:

Queen doña Berenguela had her brother, Enrique, in her custody, and managed the affairs of the kingdom, together with the archbishop of Toledo and the bishop of Palencia, for three months or a little longer.

But some unworthy magnates began to conspire and to invent certain fictions whereby, after removing the boy king from the

power and care of his sister and the prelates, they could rule the kingdom as they pleased, like lords.¹¹

Juan of Osma confirms the diplomas' suggestion: Berenguela's authority was extensive enough to warrant the assertion that she "managed the affairs of the kingdom," with Enrique merely "in her custody." But her power was under threat—from "unworthy magnates" who hoped to gain custody of Enrique, and the regency, for themselves. The CLRC emphasizes the difference between Berenguela's legitimate regency and the rule of these magnates. Whereas the queen "managed the affairs of the kingdom" (*curam regni gessit*), the nobles would "rule the kingdom as they pleased, like lords" (*dominarentur in regno pro sua uoluntate*). The responsible stewardship of a legitimate regent contrasts with the magnates' arbitrary and willful lordship.

If Berenguela's regency indeed lasted "three months or a little longer," then she was removed from power nearly as soon as she had begun to wield it. Her heavy reliance on the prelates of her realm, especially those of Toledo, Burgos, and Palencia, may have alienated the nobles.¹² Nevertheless, that reliance was a matter of exigency. Women regents were viewed with suspicion by the nobility of a military society. Castile was a crusading kingdom, and both lay magnates and prelates had profited from Alfonso VIII's military success. A female regent and a boy king would arrest the flow of cash and glory on which the nobles had come to depend, at least until Enrique was of age. In the meantime, Berenguela's stream of privileges to her ecclesiastical supporters suggested that the crown's wealth would be spent on favors to the Church, rather than on rewards and promotion for the king's noble vassals.

Powerful women had to contend with the belief that their gender made them inherently unfit to rule. Many women who came to power in the Middle Ages found that alliance with the Church offered them valuable protection. They could do little to compensate the secular nobility for their perceived gender-related frailties and shortcomings. But a woman who was considered virtuous by the Church—who lived piously and patronized religious institutions—could atone for a host of other failings in the opinion of the clergy of her realm. Since bishops, abbots, and abbesses also commanded considerable financial and military resources, they were valuable allies even against a discontented lay nobility.¹³

However, Berenguela's disadvantages as regent went beyond her sex. Castilian nobles may have been loath to accept the "queen of León" as the *de facto* ruler of Castile. What was more, her son Fernando, who was now

thirteen—that is, three years older than Enrique—was heir-apparent to the Leonese throne. The magnates of Castile might have suspected that Berenguela's first loyalty would be to the advantage of her own children, and perhaps to that of the kingdom that they would one day inherit.

Taken with her gender, her dependence on the Church, and her unlikelihood as a military leader, this connection to León may have been enough to convince the nobles to put the regency in the hands of one of their own. An obvious candidate was Álvaro Núñez de Lara, Alfonso VIII's *alférez*, who had continued in that office after Enrique's accession. A member of one of Castile's leading families, Álvaro Núñez held a position rivaled only by that of the royal majordomo, Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón. As one of the executors of Alfonso VIII's will, Gonzalo Rodríguez had at least tacitly endorsed Berenguela's authority in the charters that fulfilled the late king's wishes. He had also served for a long time as Berenguela's tenant in her arras properties. Gonzalo Rodríguez therefore had preexisting personal loyalties to the queen. Nevertheless, he chose at this juncture to throw his weight behind Álvaro Núñez.¹⁴

The CLRC suggests Berenguela surrendered control of Enrique sometime in February 1215. The surviving documents bear out that conclusion. On January 2, 1215, Archbishop Rodrigo reached a settlement with an officer of Enrique's household in a dispute over the town of Villaumbrales. The charter that confirmed the settlement requested that the pope, Enrique, and Berenguela all exert themselves to guarantee its stability. For greater surety, the charter itself was to be sealed by Enrique and Berenguela as well as by the parties to the quarrel.¹⁵

This is the first, and one of the only, documents that appeals to Berenguela's authority alongside—and virtually on par with—Enrique's. It is striking that she, along with the king and the pope, is asked to see that the charter is enforced; this implies that her role as regent was an active and powerful one. It is even more striking that she is asked to seal the charter in tandem with Enrique; the parties to the quarrel evidently understood her to hold genuine regalian authority.¹⁶

In the same month, Berenguela appears in one of her brother's diplomas for the first and only time. Although the diploma was meant to fulfill the terms of Alfonso VIII's will, it differs from the charters issued by Alfonso's executors, which had also acknowledged Berenguela's authority. This diploma was issued by the king himself, and Berenguela had always been absent from such documents. Yet here she asserted not only her authority over

Enrique, but also—once again—its source. The king acted “with the consent and approval of doña Berenguela, the illustrious queen of León, daughter of the aforementioned don Alfonso, king of Castile of most blessed memory; to whom her mother, Queen Leonor of blessed memory, entrusted the administration of the kingdom.”¹⁷ As in November of 1214, when her incipient regency needed to be firmly justified in order to prevent challenges, Berenguela seems to have thought it necessary to reiterate that she was the rightful regent. But to imply that her authority as regent extended so far that Enrique could act only with her “consent and approval” was an unprecedented step.

Whatever she hoped to gain by this gambit, she was unsuccessful. It would not be long now before the nobles demanded that she surrender her authority—and Berenguela was in no position to refuse. According to the DRH,

the skillful Queen Berenguela . . . willingly allowed [Álvaro to have custody of Enrique], but—fearing the very outrages that later took place—she made Count Álvaro and the magnates swear that they would not take land away from anyone or give land to anyone, nor make war on neighboring kings, nor impose taxes . . . in any part of the kingdom, without consulting the queen herself. And they confirmed this with an oath and homage upon the hand of Archbishop Rodrigo of Toledo, and if they did not do as they promised, they would be considered guilty of treason. But because the queen was sick of the arrogance of the knights and nobles, she feared that the kingdom would be thrown into disorder under her care, and for that reason she gave the boy to Count Álvaro under the aforesaid conditions.¹⁸

The DRH claims that Berenguela reserved certain regalian rights—to make war, manage the royal demesne, and levy taxes—to herself; Álvaro could not exercise these functions of monarchy “without consulting her.” This means that Berenguela had considered control of war, taxes, and the royal patrimony to be within her authority as Enrique’s regent. Her ability to impose such restrictions also shows that her royal blood, and her legitimacy as regent, superseded whatever ineptitude for power the nobles considered her gender to create. As her parents’ daughter and chosen regent, she was still more fit to wield certain kinds of authority than the magnates were;¹⁹ she was, if not the proprietary ruler, at least a legitimate member of the plural monarchy.

Rodrigo emphasizes that Álvaro Núñez agreed to respect Berenguela's authority in these areas, confirming the agreement with an oath and homage.²⁰ As the CLRC observes, "Álvaro Núñez swore all this and did homage to the lady queen concerning it. Let him consider whether he kept his word."²¹

The chroniclers' tone is a reminder that the most detailed accounts of these events were written under royal patronage—specifically, under the patronage of Berenguela and her family. Defamation of the Lara for their assault on Berenguela's authority is to be expected, and must be evaluated with its bias in mind.²² In fact, Berenguela must have handed Enrique over to the Lara in the full knowledge that she was surrendering all but the most nominal authority. It was a major defeat, which is why her chroniclers were later at pains to disguise it as a trick practiced by malevolent nobles upon an innocent queen. The question is, how did it happen, and why did it happen so quickly?

Enrique's only surviving diploma from February 1215 records the royal court still in Burgos on the fifteenth. In this document, Alfonso VIII's merino mayor, Pedro Fernández—who served Enrique in the same capacity at least until January 22, 1215—has been replaced by Ordoño Martínez.²³ Ordoño would be Enrique's merino mayor for the rest of the king's life, in the period when Álvaro Núñez's power as Enrique's guardian reached its zenith. He was, therefore, probably put into office under Álvaro's auspices. So it appears that Berenguela turned custody of Enrique over to Álvaro, and received the magnates' oaths of fidelity in return, in Burgos between January 22 and February 15.

The magnates kept their word, too, for a time. At least, Berenguela remained at court, and Álvaro appears to have treated her with deference. At some point in these early months of Enrique's reign, the *Crónica de la población de Ávila*—written probably in the late 1250s to commemorate the exploits of Ávila's council and militia—tells us that Berenguela was very much involved in the kingdom's business, even to the point of overruling her nobles. Chronologically speaking, the *Crónica's* account of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries is remarkably accurate,²⁴ which suggests that the author could rely on living memory of the events he recorded. And the author reports that Alfonso IX sought to make peace with Castile's new king, on the condition that Enrique return to him certain Leonese castles that were now controlled by the Castilian crown.

Some of Berenguela's advisors were worried. After all, they told her, Enrique was only a boy, and he could not successfully lead Castile through a war with León. But the queen refused to hand over the castles until she had

consulted with the men of Castilian Extremadura. Representatives of the Extremaduran towns duly “came before her, with King don Enrique [also] being there.” Muño Mateo, a knight of Ávila, spoke for all the Extremadurans, assuring her that peace with León was not worth the loss of these castles. Alfonso IX had turned over the castles as guarantees that he would keep earlier treaties with Castile; when he had failed to keep the treaties, Alfonso VIII had seized the castles, as was his right. Enrique had now inherited them lawfully and should keep them:²⁵

“And, lady, those who say that a war cannot be fought successfully, because our lord [Enrique] is a child, are stating their own preferences. For he has many good vassals to advise him and to defend the land that his father left him. . . . And, lady, I tell you particularly, on behalf of the council of Ávila, that we are obligated to hold and defend as much land and as many castles as we held and defended in the time of King don Alfonso, your father; and if you give us more, we will defend more.”

And although certain people advised her otherwise, Queen doña Berenguela, may God grant her paradise, adhered to this advice instead.²⁶

The author of the *Crónica* was, as we will see, no great fan of Álvaro Núñez de Lara. But here he shows Berenguela taking counsel with the Castilian towns, in Enrique’s presence but not really in concert with him; the king never speaks or acts in the *Crónica*’s account of this debate. Berenguela, on the other hand, has the final say on exactly the decisions that she ordered the magnates to leave to her—whether to alienate royal property, and whether to go to war.

This incident might well have taken place before Álvaro Núñez took over custody of the king. But in March 1215, Berenguela issued a diploma, co-issued by her sons: “I, Berenguela, by the grace of God queen of León and Galicia, together with my sons Fernando and Alfonso.” The act itself is not unusual: Berenguela donated her *heredad* of Villanueva, in León, to the Cistercian monastery of Sobrado.²⁷ The diploma was made at the monastery of Sahagún in the Tierra de Campos, close to the Leonese-Castilian border; what is remarkable is that Alfonso IX appears to have been present.

The king of León does not appear as an actor in the diploma, either to co-issue the donation or to confirm it. But the diploma was dated by him

and him alone: "During the reign of King Alfonso in León and Galicia, and in his entire kingdom." There is no mention of Enrique. Still, the scribe separated the list of "witnesses who were present" (*testes presentes*) into those "from the kingdom of the king of Castile" and those "from the kingdom of the king of León." From León came the archbishop of Compostela; Bishop Rodrigo of León; Sancho Fernández, Alfonso IX's half-brother and *alférez*; and Juan Fernández de Limia, among others. From Castile came Archbishop Rodrigo of Toledo; Bishop Tello of Palencia; Álvaro Núñez de Lara; Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón; Alfonso Téllez de Meneses; and "Juan the scribe," Berenguela's own chancellor—plus, of course, Berenguela herself and her two sons.

The prominence of the Leonese witnesses and Alfonso IX's own itinerary suggest either that the king himself was at Sahagún, or at least that the court was at no great remove.²⁸ Like the Leonese, the Castilian attendees represented the core of their royal court. All this points to a meeting between the monarchs of Castile and León.

Had Berenguela's breach with the Lara already occurred, Álvaro Núñez would not have been present to confirm her diploma. On the other hand, if Berenguela still had only a tenuous control over Enrique and was seeking to shore up her position via the support of León, it also seems strange that she should have had Álvaro in tow. Instead, Álvaro's presence argues that the transfer of custody had already happened, under strained but amicable terms on both sides. Berenguela made no claims to Castilian power in this diploma. Her failure to mention Enrique may be due only to the fact that her *heredad* of Villanueva—the subject of the diploma—was in León, and must therefore be handled within the Leonese sphere. But the fact that this diploma identified her so singly with Leonese power—asserting her title as queen, dating by Alfonso's reign and not Enrique's, and even naming the office and tenancies of Sancho Fernández when it did not do so for any Castilian magnates²⁹—implies that she could no longer claim a regent's authority in Castile. Instead, Berenguela and Álvaro were engaged in an uneasy power-sharing arrangement, in which Álvaro had custody of Enrique but continued to acknowledge Berenguela's nominal authority. That arrangement broke down within a month.³⁰

The *terminus ante quem* is provided by Enrique's diploma of April 21. In it, Álvaro appears for the first time with the title of count. Previously, the only Castilian noble who had held this title was Álvaro's brother, Fernando Núñez de Lara, who received it from Alfonso VIII. Now, doubtless at his own behest, Álvaro had been granted the title too. On the same date, and

also for the first time, Álvaro's brothers Gonzalo Núñez and Count Fernando confirmed third and fourth among the Castilian nobles.³¹ Count Fernando had enjoyed pride of place in the confirmation lists of royal diplomas ever since the death of Diego López de Haro the year before. But since his return to the Castilian court around Christmas of 1214, Gonzalo Núñez had been listed fifth or sixth among his peers.³² Now, however, Fernando and Gonzalo would confirm Enrique's diplomas in third and fourth position at least until the beginning of May.³³ After that, Álvaro seems to have yielded to the indignation of his peers and restored a more usual sequence³⁴—at least until Gonzalo too received the title of count in 1216, whereupon he again began to confirm in fourth place.³⁵

The honors that all three Lara brothers had attained by April 21 argue that Álvaro had achieved unmitigated influence over the young king. Berenguela, in other words, must have been well out of the way. And, in fact, she was—as is demonstrated by a charter issued that April by Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón, Gonzalo Rodríguez's brother.

At Carrión, in the Tierra de Campos, Rodrigo Rodríguez and his wife, Inés Pérez, founded the monastery of Santa María de la Vega de Saldaña and endowed it with "that grant which King Enrique and his sister doña Berenguela gave us," among other properties. They went on to date their charter by both monarchs: "During the reign of King Enrique with his sister Queen Berenguela in Toledo and Castile. Lope Díaz being the king's *alférez*. The king's majordomo being Gonzalo Rodríguez. The king's merino mayor being Fernando Ladrón." The list of witnesses (*testes*) that follows includes Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón; his son, Rodrigo González; Suero Téllez; García Fernández; Pedro Fernández; "and many others of the king's court."³⁶

Considering that the donors and witnesses were themselves regular attendees at court, along with the reference to "many others" of the king's entourage who were present, Julio González assumed that the court was actually in Carrión sometime that April. Still, he noted that something was not quite right. Enrique's merino mayor had been Ordoño Martínez since February 1215. And his *alférez* in April of that year—and at all other times during his reign—was Álvaro Núñez de Lara, not Lope Díaz de Haro.³⁷ In short, the court officers identified in Rodrigo Rodríguez's charter do not correspond to the occupants of those positions from any time during Enrique's reign—yet the document does name Enrique as king, which means that the errors (if they are errors) cannot be blamed on a scribal blunder, such as an incorrectly written year. Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón was sufficiently well placed at court

to have known who occupied each of the major offices, and to have avoided such clumsy mistakes in a legal record.³⁸ Taken together with Berenguela's unusual appearance in the dating formula, the inconsistencies in his charter suggest a deliberate attempt to reformulate the status quo.

By the date of this charter, then, the definitive break between Álvaro and Berenguela had occurred. Álvaro Núñez had taken Enrique and the court away from Berenguela's strongholds in the Tierra de Campos, into Castilian Extremadura, where the Lara themselves had ample support.³⁹ Although the list of witnesses of Rodrigo Rodríguez's charter includes several prominent magnates who regularly attended at the royal court, it omits the three Lara brothers and their relatives and supporters, such as Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros and Guillermo González, who do appear in Enrique's diplomas of the same month.⁴⁰ The men who witnessed Rodrigo Rodríguez's donation, on the other hand, include a virtual who's-who of the faction that would support Berenguela during the difficult years to follow: Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón and his son Rodrigo González; Suero Téllez de Meneses; and García Fernández de Villamayor.

The charter therefore represents a gathering of Berenguela's partisans in Carrión, under the auspices of Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón and in the presence of his brother, Gonzalo Rodríguez, who still held his office as Enrique's majordomo. Carrión was a Girón stronghold; Gonzalo and Rodrigo Rodríguez had held its tenancy jointly under Alfonso VIII for many years, beginning in 1205⁴¹ and continuing at least until January 1214.⁴² And the court described in this charter is not Enrique's court, however much the document may assert otherwise. Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón had indeed been Enrique's majordomo since his accession, and would continue in that position for some time yet. But Enrique's *alférez* never had been, and never would be, Lope Díaz de Haro. Nor did Fernando Ladrón ever serve as his merino mayor. Neither of these men had even held those offices in the past. But they would hold them in the future. Lope Díaz de Haro was appointed as Fernando III's *alférez* the moment that the young king—and his mother—came to the throne. And, although Fernando III's first merino mayor was one Gonzalo Pérez de Arnales, that man was succeeded in a few years by Fernando Ladrón.⁴³

This is, in other words, a description of the court as it would be once Berenguela regained real power. However, Rodrigo Rodríguez's charter should not be read as an attempt to hoodwink anyone about who Enrique's court officers were. It was part of an effort to construct and reinforce a discourse that supported Berenguela's claims to authority—a discourse that

could compete with the one promulgated by Álvaro Núñez de Lara and the royal chancery. The version of events recorded in such charters was a narrative that the court (or, in this case, part of the court) made for itself, to establish legitimacy and seek consensus.⁴⁴

Consensus, however, was not forthcoming.⁴⁵ The claims of Berenguela's partisans to represent "the king's court" meant little when the king himself was elsewhere, attended by a court of his own. And the magnates soon acknowledged this:

Once the king had been removed from the queen's power, after not many days a division was created among the barons of the kingdom, some of whom—namely, Gonzalo Rodríguez and his brothers, and many others—adhered to Álvaro Núñez, but some of whom [bound themselves by] a most firm agreement among themselves against those others.⁴⁶

Even the Girón, despite their initial support, had ceased to be Berenguela's men.

In fact, hardly anyone was. Notwithstanding Juan of Osma's contentions, Berenguela's defeat was virtually total. The Girón, the Haro, Archbishop Rodrigo, Bishop Tello of Palencia—all the Castilian nobles and prelates who had once supported her were in attendance at Enrique's court by April 21.⁴⁷ Enrique was, of course, the rightful king, regardless of who had custody of him. But there is no need to see this abandonment of Berenguela as a stratagem to preserve her brother's rights during her absence by placing him under her allies' supervision, as Archbishop Rodrigo recommends.⁴⁸ Certainly Berenguela would later be careful to avoid any appearance of infringing on Enrique's rights to Castile. But at this moment her right, not Enrique's, was at issue—her right as regent, which she had all but given away in surrendering custody of her brother to Álvaro Núñez. To the Castilian magnates, it must have seemed neither wise nor necessary to support the Leonese queen now.

The Lara Regency

Once firmly in control of both king and kingdom, Álvaro Núñez de Lara proved himself a capable regent. Even the CLRC admits that "the majority of the barons" had wanted him to take charge of the king and kingdom away

from Berenguela, and the PCG implies that Berenguela herself thought him the best candidate for a noble regency.⁴⁹ Individual charters occasionally acknowledge his authority in dating formulas that refer to Álvaro Núñez “ruling the whole land under” the king.⁵⁰ These references, while not numerous, certainly indicate a more widespread acceptance of Álvaro’s regency than had ever been accorded to Berenguela’s. The nobles’ resistance to rule by a solitary woman, even a woman regent, had reshaped the plural monarchy to include Álvaro Núñez and exclude Berenguela, except for her tenuous claim on the rights Álvaro had sworn to preserve for her. This reshaping had been widely accepted and legitimized, not only by the Castilian prelates but also by the lesser elites who issued charters. It was a vivid lesson in how malleable Castile’s monarchy could be, and how heavily it relied on noble support.

In the summer of 1215, Álvaro Núñez tried to reshape the monarchy further by arranging a marriage for Enrique. At eleven, Enrique was canonically still too young to marry, but Álvaro’s haste is understandable. If the king could marry and produce a child, he or she would dislodge Berenguela from her current, dangerous position as the heir to Enrique’s throne⁵¹—a position that gave her a share in royal power whether she held the regency or not. Álvaro’s choice of bride itself reveals his ongoing anxiety about Berenguela’s claims. He betrothed Enrique to Mafalda, a sister of Afonso II of Portugal.

Despite the Treaty of Coimbra (1213), Portugal and León were still quarreling over the claims of Alfonso IX’s first wife, Teresa, and her sisters against their brother Afonso II.⁵² An alliance with the king of Portugal would give Álvaro Núñez an important bulwark against Berenguela’s supporters in León.⁵³ Better still, Mafalda was Álvaro’s own cousin, which promised him considerable personal advantage from the union.⁵⁴

There were difficulties, however. Mafalda, at twenty-one, was ten years older than her prospective husband, and had been preparing to take vows as a nun. Moreover, she and Enrique were related within the canonically forbidden degrees of kinship. The legitimacy of the marriage, and of any future children, depended on a papal dispensation. Still, it is not clear that Álvaro, in the great tradition of Iberian royal marriage-brokers, sought a dispensation at all. He concluded a marriage agreement with Afonso II on August 29, 1215, and Mafalda came to Castile.⁵⁵ However, Archbishop Rodrigo is confident that the marriage was never consummated⁵⁶—as indeed it probably was not, considering Enrique’s age—and hence was never valid. Certainly Mafalda never appears in any of Enrique’s diplomas, as a married queen ought to do.⁵⁷

While the parties concerned were waiting for Enrique to mature, Innocent III learned what had happened. Under the pressure of excommunication, Enrique and Mafalda separated, did penance, and were absolved.⁵⁸ Mafalda returned to Portugal and the cloister. Álvaro's marital gambit had failed.

That May, too, Álvaro had something new to worry about. Berenguela had sent her son Fernando, now almost fifteen, to complete his education at his father's court. On May 31, 1216, Alfonso IX issued a diploma "together with my son, Infante don Fernando,"⁵⁹ for the first time since 1204. Berenguela's influence in León was on the rise now that Alfonso IX had again recognized her son as his heir. Álvaro, whose attempt at a marriage alliance with Portugal had already put him in Alfonso IX's bad graces, could only protect himself by patching things up with León.

In high summer 1216, the courts of León and Castile met at Toro to conclude a treaty. Its emphasis was on maintaining peace along the border, and was directed at small-scale offenses committed by the people of border towns, rather than at the territorial aggression of magnates or of the kings themselves. For León, the guarantors of the king's good faith were Sancho Fernández, Alfonso IX's half-brother and *alférez*, and Juan González, along with "many other vassals of the king of León." For Castile, they were—not surprisingly—Count Álvaro Núñez, his brothers Count Fernando and Count Gonzalo, "and many other vassals of the king of Castile." No other names are mentioned.⁶⁰

That Castile names only three noble guarantors may not be remarkable, when León provides only two. But disharmony was growing in the ranks of the Castilian magnates. The CLRC reports that in mid-August 1216, Castile's nobles met in Valladolid to discuss their differences and make peace among themselves. Instead of peace, though, some new quarrel broke out, and it cost Álvaro the support of the Girón. With the Girón went Lope Díaz de Haro; Alfonso Téllez de Meneses and his brother Suero Téllez; Rodrigo and Álvaro Díaz de Cameros; and Juan González.⁶¹ All of them, "suffering over the ruin of the kingdom" under Álvaro Núñez, turned to "the wisdom [*prudencia*] of Queen Berenguela, [and] humbly begged her to take pity on the kingdom's distress."⁶²

The magnates named in the CLRC did not actually leave Enrique's court in August of 1216. They continued to confirm the king's diplomas until the end of that year.⁶³ However, the court *was* in Valladolid that summer,⁶⁴ and it is hard not to conclude that the nobles' conflict was linked to the treaty that Álvaro was then negotiating with Alfonso IX. But the treaty appears

innocuous enough. What other negotiations were in play between the courts of León and Castile that August?

Álvaro had already tried, and failed, to establish a marriage alliance with Portugal. His need to ally with León was just as urgent, and so was his need for Enrique to displace Berenguela with an heir. He may have sought to wed Enrique to Sancha, the elder of Alfonso IX's two daughters from his first marriage. This match was as unlikely as Enrique's first, since he was twelve and Sancha was about twenty-four.⁶⁵ But it could have been a major coup. Sancha was the daughter of a Portuguese queen who had powerful allies in that kingdom. She was also, arguably, heir to the throne of León. Although a woman, she was older than Berenguela's son Fernando, and they had both been born of consanguineous and therefore illegitimate marriages. With the power of Castile—and her father's consent—at her back, Sancha would stand a very good chance of becoming queen of León when Alfonso IX died.

That such a marriage was privately negotiated during the meeting at Toro is strongly suggested by the fact that Alfonso IX issued his next surviving diploma, of August 20, "together with my children," *una cum filiis meis*.⁶⁶ It seems that one or both of his half-sisters had joined young Fernando in his privileged place in his father's diplomas.⁶⁷ This is the first time that Alfonso IX accorded either Sancha or Dulce the status of potential heirs by co-issuing with them, but it would not be the last.⁶⁸

Was it this that caused the Castilian magnates to rebel? The idea of uniting the two kingdoms was not very palatable either to them or to their Leonese counterparts, even when it was finally accomplished. Besides, Berenguela's son Fernando had long been acknowledged as heir to León—an acknowledgement confirmed by Alfonso IX when he included the boy in his diplomas that May. From the Castilian point of view, Fernando was an appealing candidate for the Leonese throne. He had been raised largely by his mother and in her homeland; he was likely to become a king sympathetic to Castilian interests, perhaps even willing to promote them by favoring Castilian magnates with Leonese tenancies and offices. With Fernando ruling León, the Castilian nobles would enjoy all the benefits of a privileged relationship with him, and none of the disadvantages of union. Sancha's marriage to Enrique, on the other hand, was likely not only to unite the kingdoms but also to invite the approach of adventurous Portuguese nobles, hoping for favors from a half-Portuguese queen. And whatever prizes she granted them were as liable to come from Castile's bounty as León's.

In any case, the queen of León was a natural rallying point for any magnates who were dissatisfied with Lara rule. If some nobles were once again moved to reshape the Castilian monarchy—this time by taking the regency out of Álvaro Núñez's hands—Berenguela presented an obvious alternative. As Queen Leonor's designated regent, and even as Enrique's heir, she had a justifiable claim to authority. Her return to the regency could be legitimized as the restoration of the true regent, who had been manipulated and overthrown by faithless nobles. Nevertheless, Castile's magnates did not come over to her *en masse*; indeed, most of them continued to support Álvaro. The ones who did turn to Berenguela were those who had personal bonds of loyalty to her—those who had already been her clients.

The moment when the magnates of Castile broke into factions is remarkably clear in the sources. On December 29, 1216, Enrique issued a diploma at Uclés that was confirmed by his usual cohort of magnates: Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón as majordomo, Count Álvaro Núñez as *alférez*, Count Fernando Núñez, Count Gonzalo Núñez, Lope Díaz de Haro, Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros, Alfonso Téllez de Meneses, Suero Téllez de Meneses, and Ordoño Martínez, the *merino mayor*.⁶⁹ On January 8, 1217, Enrique issued a privilege to Álvaro himself in the town of Maqueda. Now the list of confirmers has changed dramatically: Martín Muñoz is the majordomo, followed by Count Álvaro Núñez as *alférez*, Count Gonzalo Núñez, an unidentified Díaz, Count Fernando Núñez, Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros, Guillermo González, and Ordoño Martínez, the *merino mayor*.⁷⁰

In short, nearly all the magnates the CLRC identifies as Berenguela's partisans had left the court between December 29 and January 8, and Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón had been dismissed from his office as majordomo after almost nineteen years of service. His replacement, Martín Muñoz, was probably one of Count Álvaro's nephews.⁷¹ This was the moment of rupture, when the Girón, Meneses, and Haro withdrew their support from Álvaro and either abandoned the court or were thrust out of it. Yet the fact that this final break occurred so much later than the quarrel at Valladolid does not mean that the two events were unrelated. On the contrary, Álvaro's proposed marriage alliance was moving forward in León at the same time.

On January 6, Alfonso IX bestowed a queen's rents upon his daughters Sancha and Dulce. The properties Sancha and Dulce received were to belong to them for life, unless one of them died or married. In that case, all the properties of the dead or married woman would go to her surviving, unwed

sister. If both sisters married or died, the property reverted to the crown;⁷² presumably, each of them would have received a separate arras upon her marriage.

The diploma that made this grant was issued at a *curia plena*,⁷³ which indicates that the king sought broad recognition and consensus for his act. His decision to endow his daughters with such a wealth of rents and castles, and his choice of such a public forum, was an explicit attempt to establish them as potential heirs. The towns and castles they received gave Sancha and Dulce a formidable presence in the kingdom of Galicia, a region where their mother already enjoyed strong support. From there, they would be well placed to confront Berenguela and Fernando in any future contest for the succession. And, so far from co-issuing this document as befits an heir, Fernando is never mentioned in it and does not confirm it, although his formal recognition of the grant would be critical if he were the future king of León.

Fernando's willingness to accept this grant is also unlikely. It assigns Sancha and Dulce at least one Galician castle that properly belonged either to Berenguela or to Fernando himself: Candrei, which Alfonso IX gave to Berenguela as arras in 1199, and which Berenguela then bestowed on Fernando in the Treaty of Cabreros. If the "Santa Cruz" that Alfonso IX now gave to Sancha and Dulce was Santa Cruz de Tineo, then that castle too had been assigned to Berenguela in 1199 and to Fernando at Cabreros. The same treaty had also given Berenguela all of Teresa's rents in Villafranca, Valcarcel, and Benavente—three towns that Alfonso IX now said would pass from Teresa to her daughters when she died. Granted, this provision of the Cabreros treaty seems never to have been enforced. Only a few months after the treaty was issued, Queen Teresa had appeared in the dating formula of an individual charter as the tenant of Villafranca.⁷⁴ She continued to be named in that capacity throughout the following years, right up until the time that Alfonso IX guaranteed that the town would pass to her daughters,⁷⁵ and beyond. Yet even if Berenguela and Fernando were resigned to seeing Teresa occupy certain Leonese towns for life, they would not have welcomed a royal decree that secured those towns for her daughters after her death. Nor would it have been lost on them that Alfonso IX was simultaneously asking the pope to confirm Teresa's possession of the rents of Villafranca, Valcarcel, and Benavente, which the king said he had given her "for life."⁷⁶

In all, then, Alfonso IX's diploma of January 6 disadvantaged Fernando and positioned Sancha and Dulce for major roles in the Leonese monarchy. It is highly probable that Alfonso IX acted with an eye to Sancha's proposed

marriage to Enrique, and that his actions were connected with the mass departure of magnates from the Castilian court.

The DRH corroborates this sequence of events. After losing the support of the Haro, Girón, Meneses, and Cameros at Valladolid in August, it says, Álvaro Núñez retreated to Castilian Extremadura and the Transierra with Enrique and the court, seeking support among the powerful men of that region.⁷⁷ According to the DRH, the court was at the fortress of Maqueda in the diocese of Toledo when Berenguela secretly sent an envoy there to report on Enrique's condition, for "she was worried that Count Álvaro was growing careless of him." But Álvaro discovered the queen's messenger and his mission:

[Álvaro] had a letter forged and sealed with a false version of the noble queen's seal, which said that on the advice of the magnates of the Tierra de Campos, the noble queen had written to certain men, asking them to use the poison she had sent them to make a lethal drink for her brother . . . and the messenger was instantly hanged.⁷⁸

The CLRC names Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón and Alfonso Téllez de Meneses among Berenguela's alleged co-conspirators.⁷⁹ Nowhere is the source of Berenguela's power more explicitly stated in the contemporary sources. Álvaro is shown withdrawing to Castilian Extremadura and the Transierra to avoid the queen and her faction of "magnates of the Tierra de Campos," among whom the Girón and Meneses, hereditary lords in that region, figure prominently. As Martínez Sopena observes, it is astonishing that Berenguela's authority in the Tierra de Campos had been strong enough to survive her initial confrontation with the Lara.⁸⁰ That it had is a testament to her power in the region and its consequent importance in her strategies.

Enrique was in Maqueda on January 8, 1217⁸¹—almost precisely at the moment that Berenguela's partisans left the court. Was the accusation true? Enrique's death would have been very convenient for Berenguela and her allies, and this moment—before he could contract a marriage with Sancha—would have been an appealing time for them to strike.⁸² The response of Berenguela, of her faction, and even of the chroniclers, who insist the queen "was innocent of such a great crime, and guilty of nothing,"⁸³ would have been exactly the same whether she was guilty or not. And it would have been nearly as much to Álvaro's advantage to have Berenguela branded a traitor and attempted regicide, which would not only extract her from power in

Castile but also remove the chief obstacle that stood between Enrique and the crown of León. Indeed, the CLRC avers that Álvaro Núñez's partisans had made such accusations in the past, but had never been able to make the charges stick.⁸⁴ Still, the enemies of powerful medieval women often accused them of plotting assassinations, especially by poison.⁸⁵ Very little proof can be adduced on either side.

Sensing the onset of open hostilities, Berenguela left Las Huelgas, where she had been living in the company of two of her sisters—Leonor, who was still unmarried, and Constanza, the abbess of the convent. Together with Leonor, she sought refuge in the Tierra de Campos, at Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón's castle of Autillo.⁸⁶ Castile was on the brink of civil war.

A House Divided

The season of Lent, with its prohibitions on warfare, came early that year. Once Easter had passed (March 26), Álvaro launched an assault into the Tierra de Campos. His targets were the personal properties of the Girón and the Meneses, which he raided and burned. Álvaro and Enrique then besieged the castle of Montealegre, which was defended by Suero Téllez de Meneses. The Girón and Alfonso Téllez, Suero's brother, rode to his aid; but when they realized that the king was present at the siege, they could take no action. Suero himself had to surrender the castle when Enrique demanded it of him.⁸⁷ Berenguela and her supporters were careful not to give their enemies any excuse to claim that they were plotting to overthrow the rightful king, or even to infringe on his authority. That was the only way to maintain the legitimacy of their cause—but it put them at a decided tactical disadvantage.

Along with the Girón and Meneses, Berenguela's supporters included Lope Díaz de Haro and, eventually, Rodrigo and Álvaro Díaz de Cameros.⁸⁸ Still, her situation was dire. Even if she had been able to wage open war on the king of Castile without sacrificing her claims to legitimacy, she could not have mustered the necessary army. Enrique's court was attended by a full complement of Castilian bishops through the turmoil of 1216 and 1217—not excepting Archbishop Rodrigo and Bishop Tello Téllez de Meneses of Palencia, who had been Berenguela's right and left arms during her own brief regency. Berenguela had powerful friends, but very few of them. She could no longer even rely on the favor of León; Alfonso IX had turned his back on her to negotiate his own advantage with Álvaro. Her son Fernando remained

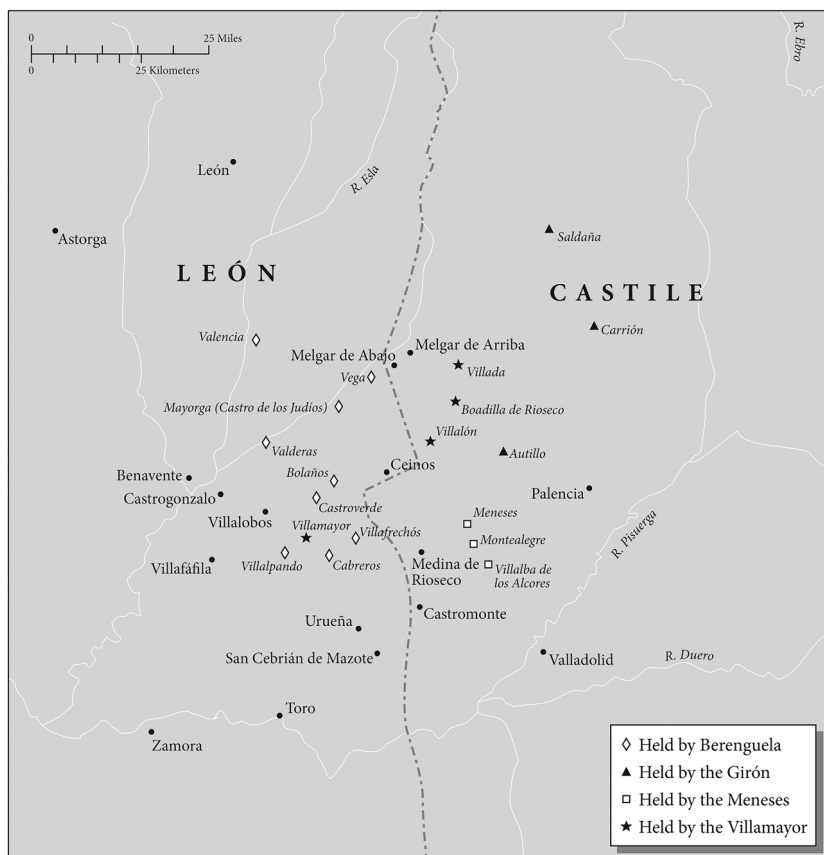


Figure 7. Berenguela's possessions and allies in the Tierra de Campos, c. 1215.

at the Leonese court, but his status as heir was in question.⁸⁹ Álvaro, meanwhile, had allies, power, and a crowned king at his side.

On May 6, Enrique granted the town and castle of Cabezón to the town council of Valladolid as a reward for its services to him during the recent unrest in his kingdom. The diploma describes that unrest as if it were already a thing of the past: “for the welcome and faithful services that you did me in my times of need during my youth, when my kingdom was inflamed by discord and the dissension of my magnates.”⁹⁰ Later the same month, Enrique gave the castle of Grañón to Count Gonzalo Núñez de Lara and his wife María as recompense:

for the many and welcome services that you faithfully showed me and do not cease to show me every day, and for the men and other things that you lost in my service, and for certain extremely serious damages that you incurred for my sake in the acquisition of my kingdom, when I was hindered from reigning by enemies.⁹¹

In Autillo and in the castle of Cisneros, where Berenguela’s partisans were assembled, the mood was growing desperate. “The queen and her nobles . . . did not know what to do, because as long as the king was with the army they could not attack, nor could they endure the injuries that were being inflicted upon them.”⁹² In the king’s name, Álvaro Núñez now demanded that Berenguela surrender her border properties. She and her allies debated whether to obey.⁹³ If Berenguela refused, she would be a traitor. If she consented, she lost all the towns and castles that she had so carefully amassed—and with them her significance.

As the queen and her partisans agonized, fate intervened. One day in Palencia, Enrique was playing outdoors with the noble youths of his retinue—“supervised rather inattentively,” as Archbishop Rodrigo observes.⁹⁴ One of them—possibly Íñigo López de Mendoza⁹⁵—threw a stone or roof tile that struck the thirteen-year-old king in the head, wounding him critically. As Enrique lingered near death, his physicians tried everything, including surgery, to save him. But the king died of his wound a few days later.⁹⁶

Some have questioned whether this was as much of an accident as the chronicles claim.⁹⁷ Berenguela was in a precarious position from which Enrique’s death removed her at one stroke, and the Lara had already accused her of plotting against his life. Again, however, there is not much evidence.

Iñigo López de Mendoza, the presumed assassin, had been in Enrique's entourage for months following the purge of Berenguela's supporters. He was not a prominent figure, and he never became one, even after Berenguela would have been in a position to reward him for his perilous loyalty. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine that Berenguela would have risked so much. As reluctant as the Castilian magnates had been to deliver the kingdom into the hands of a female regent, they would have been far more reluctant to deliver it into the hands of a female regicide. Enrique's death appears to be one of those strange accidents that sometimes divert history—but Berenguela was quick enough to turn it to her advantage.

Contemporary evidence suggests that Enrique died on June 6.⁹⁸ But Álvaro Núñez evidently despaired of his life much earlier, for on May 28 and 29 Alfonso IX issued diplomas confirmed not only by both Sancha and Dulce but also by a new majordomo, Count Álvaro Núñez de Lara.⁹⁹ Castile's regent was hedging his bets. The fact that he found Alfonso IX receptive to his offer of service testifies to the cordial relations he had previously enjoyed with the Leonese king. Álvaro was named to a lofty court office, and Alfonso IX immediately began to have Sancha and Dulce confirm his diplomas as his heirs. The actions of Alfonso IX and Álvaro Núñez in this moment of crisis reveal their greatest fear—that Berenguela would assert her rights to the throne of Castile.

And so she did. Berenguela quickly learned of her brother's death, even though the chronicles claim that Álvaro tried to conceal it.¹⁰⁰ She dispatched Lope Díaz de Haro and Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón to Alfonso IX's court at Toro, with instructions to retrieve her son Fernando "by whatever pretense, by whatever trick" they could find.¹⁰¹ Berenguela knew that it was not in her former husband's interest to send Fernando back to her if the throne of Castile was vacant. Yet her envoys succeeded; Alfonso IX released Fernando to his mother.

Sixteen-year-old Fernando now stood very close to the crown of Castile. His father could respond, for the moment, only by disinheriting him in León. He and Álvaro were determined that León and Castile would not be united—at least, not under the direction of Berenguela.

The Assembly of Valladolid

No one had ever expected Fernando to enter the line of the Castilian succession. But with the death of the last of Alfonso VIII's sons, Berenguela once again became heir to the throne—and Fernando became her heir in turn.

Berenguela's claim was by no means unassailable. Alfonso IX himself reportedly opined that "the kingdom was vacant" following Enrique's death.¹⁰² Berenguela's title to Castile meant nothing unless she could back it with the fidelity of the nobles, the endorsement of the bishops, and the acclamation of the towns. She set out to gain all three.

After a rapid consultation with her noble allies, Berenguela brought Fernando to Palencia, where her old partisan, Bishop Tello Téllez de Meneses, received them with the solemn procession due to royalty.¹⁰³ His support, at least, was secure. Berenguela and Fernando then left for the queen's town of Valladolid. Their progress was threatened by castles under the control of the Lara and their partisans; they paused to lay siege to one such castle, Dueñas, and took it by force.¹⁰⁴ Now, with Valladolid, Palencia, Dueñas, and her other Tierra de Campos properties at her command, Berenguela sent an embassy to Álvaro Núñez at the court of León. She sought to settle their recent differences and gain his support for her claim. But the mission failed. Álvaro's position in Castile was still strong; his followers commanded much of the kingdom's heartland.¹⁰⁵ And now he also had the favor of the king of León. Child of Alfonso VIII or no, Berenguela remained in a far more precarious position than her enemy.

Still, Valladolid received her joyously. Enrique's late gifts to reward Valladolid's "services" to him had evidently made little impression on the town council's loyalty. Here, again, Berenguela took counsel with her advisors. Until now she had moved along the Castilian-Leonese border, through lands near or within her own seignories. It was time to strike farther afield. Berenguela would cross the Duero River and go to Segovia, where delegates from the town councils of Castilian Extremadura and the Transierra were gathering to decide which candidate for the throne they would support.¹⁰⁶

Towns were the natural allies of monarchs, who could win them over with promises to expand, or at least not to encroach upon, their rights. A seated monarch could also defend the towns against similar encroachment by nobles, who sought to erode the authority of town councils and bring them under seigniorial control. And town councils, especially in Extremadura and the Transierra, were increasingly important in wartime, since they commanded municipal militias that campaigned both for the crown and for their own interests.¹⁰⁷ If Berenguela could tempt the councils to her side with promises of privileges and protection, she would have far more strength to confront the Lara faction.

Her party set out accordingly for Segovia. But about halfway along their journey, they were turned aside at Coca, whose inhabitants refused to admit them. Worse news followed:

There also it was intimated to them that the Segovians would not receive them, and neither would the other people of Extremadura. It was also insinuated to them that if they were not careful, Sancho Fernández, the king of León's brother, was following them with a host of knights to do them harm and to seize them if he could.¹⁰⁸

Berenguela and her followers retreated hastily to Valladolid. More vivid proof of Alfonso IX's hostility toward his former wife and their son could scarcely be imagined; he had sent his half-brother—his *alférez* and most trusted courtier—at the head of a column of armed men to attack them. Meanwhile, the towns of Extremadura had proved, at best, hesitant to throw their full support behind Berenguela. On the other hand, the fact that residents of Coca warned her of the intended Leonese ambush showed that they were not fully opposed to her cause. Unable to join the town delegates in Segovia, Berenguela sent out messengers, summoning them to an assembly not in Segovia, but in Valladolid itself—and they agreed to come.

Representatives of the Extremaduran and Transierran towns, probably along with a few delegates from northern towns like Burgos, gathered at Valladolid on July 2.¹⁰⁹ That they were willing to meet at Valladolid is itself a signal of their intentions. Valladolid belonged wholly to Berenguela; there, at least, she had been recognized as queen of Castile as early as June 14.¹¹⁰ If the delegates had intended to reject Berenguela's claim, they could far more easily have done it at Segovia. Consequently, when they met at Valladolid, it was to endorse her right to rule.

The delegates assembled in a field outside Valladolid's gates, the only area large enough to hold them all.¹¹¹ Their conclusions were not entirely foregone; "different people had different opinions," and only after considerable disagreement did they reach a consensus.¹¹² They then sent for Berenguela and her sons:

Therefore the noble queen went out with her sons Fernando and Alfonso and with the bishops—namely, of Burgos and Palencia—and with other men of religion and barons who supported her, and

came to the aforesaid place, where a crowd of people awaited her arrival. One of them, speaking for all of them since they had all agreed on this, recognized on behalf of the populace that the kingdom belonged by right to Queen doña Berenguela, and that everyone recognized her as *domina* and queen of the kingdom of Castile. Nevertheless, they all unanimously begged her to grant the kingdom, which was hers by proprietary right, to her elder son, don Fernando, because since she was a woman, she could not withstand the burdens of ruling the kingdom.

Seeing what she had most ardently desired, she joyfully agreed to their request and granted the kingdom to her son. He was acclaimed by everyone in a great shout: “Long live the king!” Then, with tremendous joy, everyone went to the church of Santa María. There, giving thanks to God, all who were present, both the magnates and the people of the cities and other towns, did homage upon the hands of King don Fernando. And so his mother returned to her father’s palace with honor and great joy.¹¹³

Although the CLRC would have it that Berenguela yielded the kingdom to Fernando at her subjects’ request—even if their request was in accord with her own desires—Archbishop Rodrigo describes the act as entirely her own:

Once they had all met at Valladolid—both the leading citizens of Extremadura, who were there to represent everyone, and the Castilian nobles and knights—they offered the kingdom of Castile to the noble queen, by common consent and with the fidelity that was due to her. For since the sons were dead, and she was the firstborn daughter, the succession of the kingdom belonged to her, and this was proved by a privilege of her father’s, which was kept in a chest in the cathedral of Burgos. Also, the entire kingdom had confirmed this by oath and homage twice, before the king had had a son. But she, restraining herself within the bounds of purity and modesty in a way superior to all other ladies in the world, refused to keep the kingdom for herself. . . . And there [at Valladolid], she delivered the kingdom to her aforementioned son with the approval of all. Infante Fernando was led to the church of Santa María, and there was raised to the throne of the kingdom. . . . And there everyone did him

homage and swore the fealty due to a king, and thus he returned to the royal palace with kingly honor.¹¹⁴

The sequence of events is basically the same in both chronicles: the delegates offer Berenguela the crown as the rightful heir, she turns it over to Fernando III, and he becomes king, receiving his subjects' homage and fealty. It is easy to understand why these passages are so often interpreted to mean that Berenguela surrendered or even abdicated her rights to Castile. Still, there are two important differences between them.

The first is the DRH's elaborate justification of Berenguela's claim to the throne. Archbishop Rodrigo is at pains to explain why the royal succession devolved on her. He points out that Berenguela had been publicly acknowledged as heir twice during her childhood, presumably after her brother Sancho's death in 1181 and at the Curia of Carrión in 1188. His mention of the written proof of her rights preserved at the cathedral of Burgos is a reference to the Treaty of Seligenstadt, in which Alfonso VIII had formally designated her his heir in the context of her betrothal to Conrad of Hohenstaufen, and which remains at the cathedral today.¹¹⁵ Fernando III's accession to the throne was only as valid as Berenguela's claim to it; thus, by justifying Berenguela's succession, the archbishop justified Fernando's too. Nevertheless, the effect of this passage is to emphasize that Berenguela had a direct and legitimate right to the throne of Castile.

The same point is made at less length by the CLRC, in which the delegates recognize "that the kingdom belonged by right to Queen doña Berenguela." However, a second significant difference between the two accounts is that in the CLRC, the delegates urge Berenguela to make her son king due to her feminine incapacity. Ultimately she "grant[s] the kingdom" to Fernando (*filio supradicto regnum concessit*) because this is what "she had most ardently desired," but the impetus comes from her subjects. In the DRH, on the other hand, the assembled delegates simply acclaim Berenguela as queen. It is she who decides to make Fernando king, by "delivering the kingdom" to him (*filio regnum tradens*). The DRH attributes this decision not to her weakness, but to her modesty—to womanly virtue rather than womanly vice.

The question of Berenguela's agency in this moment has received considerable scholarly attention. If the DRH and CLRC represent two opposing factions at the Castilian court, then the chroniclers' variation on this issue takes on enormous significance. It has been argued that the DRH's account, in which Berenguela transfers royal authority to Fernando of her own will, is

a face-saving measure. The truth is closer to the version in the CLRC: that Berenguela was blindsided by her subjects' refusal to accept her as sole monarch, and had to accede under pressure to their demand that she crown Fernando.¹¹⁶

It should go without saying that the DRH and CLRC are both vehicles of royal propaganda, but I am not inclined to consider them in opposition to each other, either in general or on this particular point. The CLRC certainly presents Fernando's acclamation as the request of the delegates, but adds that this is what the queen "had most ardently desired." She had, in other words, already intended to have Fernando recognized as king. And neither the CLRC nor the DRH is willing to allow that sole exercise of royal authority is proper or even possible for a woman. Even in her own court's propaganda, Berenguela's options are circumscribed by her gender.

This is far from unusual. Lois Huneycutt's study of the depiction of English queens-regnant in twelfth-century chronicles indicates that even when a queen saw herself as a ruler in her own right, contemporary writers rarely shared her view. They preferred to see women as placeholders for male monarchs, especially their sons.¹¹⁷ To some extent, then, the events at Valladolid as described in both the DRH and CLRC are a trope: since Berenguela could not really reign in her own right, she transmitted authority to her son.

However, to say that the chroniclers' portrayals are a trope is not to say that they are fictive. The Assembly of Valladolid followed the exact steps that had been prescribed in Berenguela's 1188 marriage treaty with Conrad of Hohenstaufen: if Conrad had died, and Berenguela and her children were Castile's only heirs, then their subjects were to give the kingdom "to them"—that is, to both her and her children.¹¹⁸ That treaty had made no provision for Berenguela to inherit Castile if she were widowed and childless; she would only inherit if she shared royal power with either her husband or her children. At the same time, however, as long as she was alive, her children could not hold the kingdom without her. She was the source of their legitimate authority.

At Valladolid, Berenguela used the trope of regency or transmission of power to her own advantage. She had never intended to assert her right to the throne on her own behalf; the urgency with which she summoned Fernando from León upon learning of Enrique's death proves that.¹¹⁹ Her unhappy career as her brother's regent had taught her how difficult it was for a woman to hold power without a man at her side. Her son, who was just turning sixteen, was an adult, fit to rule in his own right.¹²⁰ By bestowing the

kingship upon him, she promoted his interests, certainly; but she also protected her own. Fernando could not now become the center of an opposing faction, determined to set him on the throne in his mother's place, as had happened to Berenguela's predecessor Urraca a century earlier. There would be no civil war between mother and son. Instead, Berenguela gave her son a crown, and gave Castile the legitimate male ruler it wanted. Like the CLRC, the PCG claims that she had planned this from the beginning. By the time Berenguela tried to negotiate a peace with Álvaro Núñez, it reports:

Infante don Fernando had already been acclaimed king. For, while he was in Autillo, once Queen doña Berenguela and those great good men of hers who supported her and were with her became certain of King don Enrique's death, they all thought it a good idea to acclaim Infante don Fernando as king, and it was done thus. Then and there in Autillo they acclaimed him king, and shouted the *real!* [a cry given when a new king is proclaimed]; and they left there with him as their king . . . and they acted with him in every way as they would with their king.¹²¹

This acclamation would not have had the force of Fernando's acclamation at the Assembly of Valladolid, since it had been performed only by his mother's noble supporters. Still, if Berenguela had had her nobles declare Fernando their king before she even left the safety of Autillo, then events at Valladolid did unfold as she had planned. Even if the delegates' acclamation—or the magnates', for that matter—happened partly at their own behest, that was not unusual; we have seen how often the will of its subjects had shaped the monarchy.

But was this an abdication? Had Berenguela, in transferring monarchy to Fernando, excluded herself from it? In the ceremonies described by the DRH and CLRC, Fernando—but not Berenguela—receives the homage and fealty of those assembled, just as Enrique I had done after his father's death.¹²² Does this imply that Berenguela was not recognized as a sovereign at Valladolid, while Fernando was?

On the contrary, the rituals of homage and fealty were a precondition for Fernando's elevation to the throne. He had never before been the heir-designate to Castile, and the kingdom had never had to acknowledge him as such. Consequently, his recognition as heir to the throne and his accession to the throne had to be telescoped into a single ritual, in which he was

acknowledged as the next king and became the next king in almost the same moment. Berenguela, who as the DRH reminds us had already received the kingdom's homage and its oaths, needed only a public acclamation of her rights as queen—which, both chronicles point out, she received.

At Valladolid, Berenguela had stepped aside to let her son ascend the throne. But she had no intention of stepping back. Castile was hers—by proprietary right, as the CLRC obediently notes. If it was now also Fernando's, that made very little difference to her claims, except for making them more palatable to the gendered expectations of her subjects.¹²³ It should be noted that in 1217, Fernando was still canonically illegitimate, due to Rome's condemnation of his parents' marriage. Canonical illegitimacy did not necessarily preclude him from becoming king, but it was a handicap, at a time when popular opinion could easily be swayed against him. Berenguela's widely acknowledged hereditary right helped legitimize Fernando's kingship, just as his masculinity soothed popular anxieties about her queenship. This was plural monarchy in practice—not abdication.¹²⁴

For even in the immediate aftermath of the Assembly of Valladolid, and in spite of their mutual stress on Berenguela's womanly demurral, the DRH and CLRC both acknowledge that her role was far from passive.¹²⁵ In the days after Fernando was proclaimed king, reports the DRH, "numerous knights from Segovia and Ávila and other strongholds in Extremadura came to her [*ad eam*, i.e., Berenguela], offering her the service of their counsel."¹²⁶ Counsel was among a vassal's obligations to his lord. On an institutional level, that the Extremaduran knights offered it to Berenguela, rather than to their newly acclaimed king, means that she claimed their fealty. On a practical level, it also means that she remained central to the decision-making process of the royal court.

While Berenguela schemed to take the throne, Álvaro Núñez had approached his new lord, Alfonso IX, with a tempting idea. "[P]romising him many things that, by the grace of God, he nevertheless could not deliver," Álvaro persuaded the king to invade Castile, because, "since the kingdom was vacant, he would be able to acquire either all of the kingdom, or at least a great part of it."¹²⁷ Alfonso IX gathered his army and entered the Tierra de Campos. But, according to the CLRC, he did not come within striking distance of Valladolid until three days after the delegates had met.¹²⁸ Berenguela now dispatched the bishops of Burgos and Ávila to ask Alfonso IX to stop troubling their son, who was Castile's acknowledged king. Alfonso IX refused to speak with them—yet he still hesitated to take the offensive.¹²⁹ He may

have been waiting for support from his half-brother, Sancho Fernández, who was moving through Extremadura with forces of his own.¹³⁰

His hope in Sancho Fernández, however, would be frustrated. The Leonese *alférez* was defeated near Ávila and retreated clear to León the same day.¹³¹ When Alfonso IX finally advanced into Old Castile, he did it alone. His goal was Burgos, the heart of Old Castile and a locus of strong support for Berenguela. Still, he kept his army close to the protection of castles held by the Lara. By the time he halted in Arcos, under the shadow of the castle of Muñó and some nine kilometers from Burgos—a good strategic vantage from which to plan a siege—his army had cut a swath of destruction through the Castilian countryside.¹³²

Burgos, however, was well defended. Lope Díaz de Haro had come to its aid with “many noble and capable Castilians,” who, says the CLRC, were ready to risk anything to protect the city.¹³³ Lope Díaz himself had reasons to defend Burgos that went beyond loyalty to Berenguela and Fernando; an invading army that held Burgos would have easy access to Lope Díaz’s own lands in northern Castile,¹³⁴ and the damage already inflicted on Berenguela’s allies in the Tierra de Campos gave him reason to worry.

Alfonso IX considered his options. Berenguela had set their son on the throne, giving Castile a recognized king to rally behind. Her forces were strong in the border zone that separated his army from Leonese reinforcements and supplies. Sancho Fernández had already retreated from Extremadura in disarray. And Berenguela and Fernando had begun to move north, accompanied by municipal knights from Ávila and Segovia.¹³⁵ If Alfonso IX attacked Burgos, he would find himself pinned between Lope Díaz de Haro’s determined resistance in front of him and an advancing army under the command of his son and former wife behind him.¹³⁶ There was nothing to be gained by forcing the issue. Alfonso IX, “deceived by his vain and foolish hopes and irritated with his advisors, returned quickly to his own land.”¹³⁷

Although their greatest enemy had left the field, Berenguela and Fernando set out anyway to secure Burgos. First, however, Berenguela dispatched her two most trusted bishops, Tello Téllez de Meneses of Palencia and Mauricio of Burgos, to retrieve Enrique’s body from its temporary residence at the castle of Tariego. Álvaro Núñez, who commanded Tariego, duly released the royal corpse. Mauricio and Tello then headed north to join Fernando and Berenguela at the siege of Muñó.¹³⁸

The king and queen had evidently decided it was too dangerous to leave Muñó, so close to Burgos, in enemy hands, for reasons that Alfonso IX had

just demonstrated. Leaving Fernando to command the attack, Berenguela continued to Burgos with Tello and Mauricio, and oversaw her brother's long-delayed burial at Las Huelgas.¹³⁹ She then returned to Muñó, which her vassals—so says the CLRC—had taken by force. The victorious army proceeded to conquer first Lerma and then Lara, so central to the possessions of Berenguela's rivals that its name was already being adopted as their patronymic. With Burgos's southern flank thus secured, Berenguela returned to the city proper, this time with Fernando at her side.¹⁴⁰

Burgos received them “with a solemn procession, with great honor and infinite joy. For the Lord God had almost miraculously delivered the city of Burgos from the hands of its enemies, and restored it to its true and natural *domina*.”¹⁴¹ The cost of this near-miracle had been steep, however. Both the DRH and the CLRC report that the royal fisc and Berenguela's personal wealth were nearly exhausted, and Archbishop Rodrigo adds that the queen was reduced to selling her jewelry to raise cash.¹⁴²

The chronicles' nearly exclusive focus on Berenguela as they retell these events is remarkable. Fernando III is never shown acting independently. The chronicles even ignore the capture of Muñó, carried out under Fernando's direction, so that they can trace Berenguela's journey to bury her brother at Burgos. When the CLRC does acknowledge the success of the siege, it attributes the victory to Berenguela's vassals—not Fernando's. And when Berenguela and Fernando finally enter Burgos, the acclaim showered upon them is said to be rooted in the citizens' relief at being once again under Berenguela's rule. She is their “true and natural *domina*,” and by extension the true and natural *domina* of all Castile. Castile may indeed have had a king, but in the eyes of its chroniclers real power lay with its queen.¹⁴³

Still, her victory was incomplete. The Lara and their supporters retained important strongholds. In Burgos, Berenguela and her magnates designed a strategy to consolidate and defend the northern and western regions of Castile, and left its execution in the hands of Lope Díaz de Haro. While Lope Díaz conducted a determined campaign against the Lara-held castle of Nájera, Álvaro Núñez took the offensive, pillaging nearby Belorado and slaying its inhabitants. The monarchs grieved, says the CLRC, but God soon exacted vengeance.¹⁴⁴

On September 20, Berenguela and Fernando set out again for Palencia. En route, they encountered an ambush that Álvaro Núñez had laid for them. There was a skirmish between the Lara forces and the royal vanguard, and Álvaro's men were forced to retreat. Somehow, though, Álvaro himself fell

behind, and was overtaken by two of the vanguard's commanders, Alfonso and Suero Téllez de Meneses.

They came up to him and seized him and threw him from his horse into the mud—because it had been raining—and they brought him like that, captive and covered in mud, before the lady queen. When the lady queen saw her mortal enemy, who had inflicted so many and such great injuries on the queen and those who loved her, she gave thanks to the Most High as fervently as she could, for bestowing such a great benefit on her.¹⁴⁵

Or, as Archbishop Rodrigo has it,

But when the aforesaid knights approached him, Count Álvaro dismounted and, lying on the ground, covered himself with a shield. But they dragged him away bodily . . . and presented him captive to the king and the noble queen. And he who had done wrong to many, who had shown mercy to none, who had denied the right of lordship to his natural *domina*, now, brought low by divine justice, deprived of the help of his admiring knights and brothers, is ingloriously captured and disgraced. Then the noble queen, praising God with joy and tears, persevered at length in giving thanks, because an enemy to her, the kingdom, and her son had so easily been taken captive.¹⁴⁶

Again, the chronicles' singular focus on Berenguela is noteworthy. Álvaro is *her* prisoner (as well as her enemy), and God's grace in making him a prisoner is given to her as well. The succession is described as a contest between Álvaro and Berenguela, with scarcely any mention of Fernando. And its outcome, at least for Archbishop Rodrigo, signaled that Berenguela enjoyed divine favor: after Álvaro's capture, "everyone . . . [saw] that God Almighty guided the deeds of the noble queen."¹⁴⁷

Berenguela and Fernando brought Álvaro to Valladolid as a prisoner. There, his fate is taken up by the *Crónica de la población de Ávila*:

And the next morning the queen had everyone assemble before her. And she ordered Count don Álvaro, whom she held prisoner, to be brought there. And when they set him before her, he was greatly

afraid that she would order him to be killed. And Muño Mateo of Ávila stood up, and spoke thus:

“Lady, Count don Álvaro rebelled against you; and God and your good fortune and the right that you have caused you to capture him. But we beg you and ask as a favor that you do not consider the error that the count committed, but rather consider how you are the best lady in the world and the daughter of the best lord in the world . . . and that you should have mercy on him, for even though he did you an injury in this matter, other things will happen, God willing, in which he and his lineage may serve you. But, lady, this favor should be done on the condition that he, and all those of his faction, give you the castles and fortresses they hold.”¹⁴⁸

The *Crónica* puts Álvaro’s fate entirely in Berenguela’s hands. She alone orders the court to assemble and Álvaro to be brought before her; he, in turn, knows that she has the power to put him to death. Likewise, Muño Mateo addresses himself only to the queen. Praising her as “the best lady in the world,” he speaks of her descent from Alfonso VIII, her “right” in the kingdom, and Álvaro’s rebellion against and possible future service to her. In short, the chronicle attributes to her the rights and status of a sovereign, leaving Fernando III noticeably absent.

Berenguela responds to Muño Mateo’s sage advice:

“I thank God for the good fortune he has given me, and I thank all of you, my vassals, who loyally helped me. And God willing, don Fernando and I will do you great good and great favors for this, and I will have mercy on the count, and he should be more circumspect than to rebel against me.”¹⁴⁹

Again, Berenguela speaks as sole arbiter of Álvaro’s fate. She thanks “her vassals,” which in this context must include the knights of Ávila. Yet since there is no evidence that Berenguela held any personal lordship in Extremadura as she did in the Tierra de Campos, the men of Ávila were her vassals only insofar as she was their sovereign overlord, their reigning queen. Here, at last, Fernando III reappears; but Berenguela only speaks of future royal munificence that she and her son will bestow, and she speaks for him rather than with him. In the present moment, it is she who has mercy on Álvaro Núñez, for the crime of rebelling against *her*, rather than against both her

and his king. The fact that Berenguela remembers to acknowledge Fernando III, while Muño Mateo does not, lends anecdotal support to the argument that she was seen as the legitimate heir to the throne, and understood to have passed some (not all) of her authority to her son voluntarily. Her mention of the king is the only reminder that he shares in the sovereign power that has been so lavishly imputed to her alone. The fact that a chronicler who wrote after Berenguela's death and not under direct royal patronage (unlike Juan of Osma, Lucas of Tuy, and Archbishop Rodrigo) still considered Berenguela to wield so much authority testifies that the court chroniclers' descriptions of her power are not mere flattery.

Ultimately Berenguela, and possibly Fernando III, agreed to release Álvaro on the condition that he turn over all the fortresses held by him and his supporters. Two more strongholds, Castogeriz and Orcejón, were to be surrendered by Count Fernando Núñez, who held them. But if he refused to yield them, Álvaro swore to provide one hundred knights to help recover the fortresses by force. Álvaro himself remained in the custody of Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón until the castles under his own jurisdiction had been delivered, and was then released. By that point, however, he had lost much of his power.¹⁵⁰

Despite his brother's surrender, Count Fernando Núñez de Lara was inclined to be recalcitrant. He had summoned knights and laid in provisions for the expected royal siege of Castrogeriz. But although Berenguela and Fernando set out to confront him there, the siege either never materialized or ended in surrender. The count was persuaded to turn his castles over to Fernando III, with the promise that he would receive them back as the king's vassal.¹⁵¹ His change of heart may have been inspired by another coup of Berenguela's; on November 26, 1217, she orchestrated a peace treaty between Fernando III and Alfonso IX of León.¹⁵²

This truce was a stopgap measure; its terms were guaranteed only until Easter of the following year, with the assumption that a more lasting treaty would be negotiated in the meantime. For now, it gave Berenguela and Fernando the breathing space that they desperately needed. In a truce "established between Alfonso, the king of León, and Fernando, the king of Castile, and Queen Berenguela, his mother,"¹⁵³ Berenguela and Fernando promised to respect Alfonso IX's possession of the kingdom of León—that is, not to encroach on Leonese territory. In return, Alfonso IX promised to respect his son's possession of Castile, "and also the castles and land of the queen his mother"; he would neither seize any of Fernando's or Berenguela's castles himself, nor accept them if they were offered to him by a third party.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the treaty outlined the succession for both kingdoms. If Alfonso IX died before the treaty expired, Fernando III must pledge to Sancho Fernández that he would not take any action against the kingdom of León for fifty days. If both Alfonso IX and Sancho Fernández were dead, Fernando III must make this pledge to Sancha and Dulce, “the daughters of the king of León.” Conversely, if Fernando III died, Alfonso IX had to make an identical pledge to “his son”—that is, Fernando’s younger brother and heir—Alfonso, who must receive the same pledge from Sancho Fernández, or from Sancha and Dulce, if the royal mortality had extended to the kingdom of León.¹⁵⁴ In other words, the very treaty by which Alfonso IX recognized his son as king of Castile also made it clear that Fernando III would never be king of León. He had been excluded from the succession in favor of Sancho Fernández, and, failing him, of Sancha and Dulce. Although Alfonso IX’s own designs on Castile had been frustrated, he was still firm in his resolve to prevent the union of León and Castile under the rule of one of his sons.

Berenguela herself is a palpable force in the treaty, even though it leaves her exact status vague. She still claimed the title of “queen,” though it was apparently unacceptable to Alfonso IX that she appear any longer as “queen of León,” and she did not claim here to be queen of Castile. It was Fernando’s rights in Castile that were secured by this treaty, and Berenguela did not complicate the issue by asserting any hereditary right of her own. She had, after all, elevated Fernando to the throne specifically to avoid the uncertainties of dominion by a woman alone. Yet the treaty named her as an equal partner in negotiating the peace, together with her son and her former husband, and both she and Fernando guaranteed Alfonso IX’s possession of his castles. Likewise, the treaty acknowledged that powerful Castilian nobles could be her vassals as well as Fernando’s; and it recognized her possession of her own castles and territory, presumably those in the Tierra de Campos.

The evidence of Berenguela’s authority in both the documentary and narrative sources for 1217 is unequivocal. So far from abdicating the throne to Fernando III, she had established herself as Castile’s heir and a reigning monarch in her own right. If Castile’s monarchy was centered on the legitimate heir to the throne, then Berenguela was its proprietary queen. But at Valladolid, she established Fernando III as a proprietary monarch too. Modern conceptions of singular monarchy have made it difficult to understand what was very plain to Berenguela and Fernando’s contemporaries—that their rulership was a matter of *both-and*, not *either-or*. Without the sovereign

authority conferred by her hereditary right, she could not have directed and participated in military campaigns to crush the Lara rebellion, received the homage and service of Castilian towns and nobles, or enjoyed virtually total control of the regalian prerogative of justice in the case of Álvaro Núñez himself. Yet the extant sources concur that she did all of these things, and did them with little intervention from Fernando.

Berenguela's decision to cede authority to her son was key to his acceptance as king of Castile. That much has rarely been disputed. More recently, historians have begun to recognize that she ceded authority to him without surrendering it entirely. But regardless of her blood relationship to King Enrique, Berenguela could neither have transferred the crown to Fernando nor claimed it for herself without significant support among their subjects. And it was she, not her son, who was able to raise that support, despite the handicap of her gender.

Her faction's personal loyalty to her is clear, since they were fighting for her months before Fernando returned to Castile. At the very beginning of 1217, she had rallied her noble allies in the Tierra de Campos and made a stand there against Álvaro Núñez de Lara. Although his superior force, and her reluctance to fight openly against Enrique, would almost certainly have defeated her in the end, Enrique's sudden death gave Berenguela the advantage. The number and status of the magnates who had defended her that spring—the Haro, Girón, Meneses, and Cameros—were essential to the credibility of her claim to the throne. Without them, she could not have attracted the support of major prelates like the bishops of Palencia and Burgos (two cities that were also closely associated with Berenguela's personal lordship), or of the councils and knights of Extremadura. By putting these allies, and her personal wealth, at the service of a plural monarchy that included herself as well as her son, Berenguela won Castile's civil war. She also set the course for an extraordinary, decades-long partnership between herself and Fernando III.

Chapter 5

Queen of Castile, 1217–1230

By the end of 1217, Fernando III's authority in Castile was relatively secure. Although he would face some perturbations during the following year, Fernando had the support of enough towns, bishops, and magnates to legitimize his rule and to defend it militarily. Castile had its king.

Castile had its queen too, however. Berenguela had been a vital force not only in raising her son to power, but in repelling invasions and quashing rebellions so as to keep him there in his unsteady early months. She did not abandon this role once its initial goals had been accomplished. If Fernando was king of Castile, that was only because Berenguela was queen of Castile; she had inherited the crown, and its power still resided with her. Her reign with Fernando III went beyond the customary forms of western Iberia's plural monarchy. Fernando III had the advantages of manhood, and could exercise royal power in ways his mother could not—by commanding a crusading army, for example. But unlike a queen-consort or even the typical queen-mother, Berenguela had come to power in her own right, by inheritance. She therefore claimed the right to rule as a peer of, and sometimes as a superior to, her son.

The contemporary evidence for Berenguela's sovereign authority is overwhelming. Modern historians have generally found it confusing, however; while they may recognize that Berenguela had tremendous influence over her son throughout her life,¹ they have been uncomfortable with the idea that that influence was formal, public, and legitimate. Some have taken shelter behind the theory that Berenguela's obvious dominance in the early years of Fernando III's reign was actually a sort of regency, awarded to her because the king was still a minor—even though Fernando III was at least sixteen, and therefore of age, when he assumed the throne. Even recent scholars have

gone so far as to equate Fernando's acclamation as king at Valladolid with Berenguela's "abdication."² To some extent, these views are encouraged by the era's chronicles. But the same chroniclers who insist that Berenguela ceded sovereignty to Fernando III at Valladolid testify to her continuing authority elsewhere in their writing.

It is not my purpose to argue that Fernando III's kingly authority was anything other than genuine, or that it was subordinate to his mother's. The medieval evidence is clear on that point too. But a combination of gender bias and medieval myth has tended, over the centuries, to obscure Berenguela's considerable role in the governance of Castile during her son's reign. As a crusader and a saint, Fernando III looms large in the pantheon of Spain's medieval rulers; therefore, "It is particularly important to demythologize the events of this reign."³ A realistic assessment of Berenguela's contributions is essential to understanding this period of Spanish history. It also has important implications for the study of how men and women shared power. It has become increasingly clear that such sharing was common in the Middle Ages, and that it—rather than the wholesale exclusion of women or the dichotomy of "male" and "female" spheres of power—offers the best paradigm for understanding women's power during this period.⁴ While Berenguela and Fernando's case is exceptional in many respects, it was widely accepted by their contemporaries, which suggests that a woman who held joint sovereign power with her son was unremarkable—and perhaps, in certain contexts, familiar—to thirteenth-century observers.⁵

In this chapter, then, I will set out the evidence for Berenguela's sovereign authority as queen of Castile, and for her assumption of certain roles associated with hereditary monarchs. I will also assess the perception of her authority by foreign rulers, to demonstrate that her power was formally recognized both inside and outside Castile.

"The Noble Queen Managed Everything": Berenguela's Authority Within Castile

After 1217, Berenguela assumed a new title: queen of Castile and Toledo. A donation of that year to the monastery of Aguilar de Campóo in the Tierra de Campos is dated "In the reign of King don Fernando and his mother Queen doña Berenguela in Toledo and in Castile,"⁶ and an early pact with León likewise titles her "doña Berenguela, queen of Castile."⁷ Berenguela

had, of course, never relinquished the title of queen, *regina*, since she had first acquired it by marrying Alfonso IX. But her title had always remained the one she took in 1197: queen of León. Now she abandoned it, in favor of the title she had gained in her own right as Enrique's heir.

That she assumed the title of queen of Castile at the same time that Fernando III became king is significant in itself. It shows that although monarchy had passed through Berenguela, it had not passed over her. She had not divested herself of authority in elevating Fernando to the throne. No longer only the nominal queen of León, she adopted the Castilian royal title jointly with her son—a sign of the role she intended to play in this new reign.

Fernando III was about sixteen when he came to the Castilian throne—legally adult, but inexperienced. Berenguela was about thirty-seven. In addition to having been reared, for much of her childhood, as her father's prospective heir, she had by now also ruled with Alfonso IX in León, served as her parents' confidante and the *domina* of her own lands in Castile, and emerged victorious from her disastrous regency for Enrique. Her allies among the Castilian magnates had grown accustomed to being exactly that—*her* allies—while Fernando III had been at his father's court in León. Berenguela was well placed to rule, and knowledgeable about how to do it. It is perhaps unsurprising that, especially at first, Fernando should have deferred to her.

What *is* surprising is the strength of the language that the chroniclers use to describe their relationship as king and queen. Archbishop Rodrigo writes that "King Fernando obtained the kingdom peacefully and quietly, for the noble queen managed everything; she trained her son diligently to such an extent that he governed the kingdom and the country according to the custom of his grandfather, the noble Alfonso."⁸ Here again Berenguela is credited (as she often will be) with arranging her son's success. Rodrigo also praises her for teaching her son how to be a king—a task generally performed by a prince's male guardians and, of course, by his father.⁹ By setting Berenguela in a traditionally masculine role, Rodrigo gently underscores the influence and status she enjoyed in her relationship with her son.

If Rodrigo's portrayal is subtle, though, Lucas of Tuy's is not: "And indeed, although he was raised to the pinnacle of the kingdom, he obeyed the most wise [*prudētissima*] Queen Berenguela, his mother, as though he were the humblest schoolboy under the instructor's rod."¹⁰ This is certainly hyperbole. Even so, it is rather extreme language to use of a king, especially a king whom one is trying to praise—the rest of this section is a paean to

Fernando's virtues, his constant pursuit of justice, and his exertions on behalf of the faith.¹¹ Since Berenguela commissioned the *Chronicon mundi*, she at least must have found this kind of filial obedience praiseworthy, and wanted to commemorate it for posterity. This, it seems, is how she saw her son—as a virtuous and able ruler who nonetheless followed her instructions faithfully.¹²

From the very first diploma that Fernando III is known to have issued, he acted by Berenguela's consent: "I, Fernando, by the grace of God king of Castile and Toledo . . . by the agreement and approval and command of the lady queen my mother, make a charter."¹³ The language of "command" was perhaps too emphatic, and it soon disappeared from chancery usage;¹⁴ but Fernando continued to issue charters by his mother's "agreement and approval" (*ex assensu et beneplacito regine domine Berengarie, genitricis mee*) for the rest of her long life.

This phrasing is quite unusual. It does not appear, for instance, in the diplomas of underage kings during a regency; Enrique's regents did not use it, and neither did Alfonso VIII's, even though his earliest surviving diplomas were issued when he was only three or four years old.¹⁵ It is also unlike the formula used when monarchs co-issued diplomas with family members, such as their spouses or heirs. Fernando III's own documents illustrate the difference. He regularly co-issued diplomas with his younger brother and heir, Alfonso, for whom the chancery employed the customary language: the king acted "together with [*una cum*] my brother, Infante don Alfonso."¹⁶ Yet most of these co-issued diplomas were also made by Berenguela's "agreement and approval," which distinguished her role from Alfonso's.

Berenguela's authority in these diplomas, then, differed from that of a co-issuer and even from that of a regent. Its closest contemporary echo can be found in the charters made to fulfill Alfonso VIII's will. These documents—two of which were issued by the king's executors, and one of which was actually a royal diploma—are the ones from late 1214 and early 1215 that explicitly assert Berenguela's authority as regent, bequeathed to her by Alfonso VIII via Leonor. They were created with her "counsel" (*consilium*) in one case, and with her "consent and approbation" (*consensus et approbatio*) in the others.¹⁷ I have already argued that the claims Berenguela made by using this language during her regency were extraordinary. The phrasing did, after all, have precedents; but those precedents all stemmed from openly acknowledged sovereign power.

Berenguela's grandfather, Sancho III, had begun to issue diplomas in his own name and with the title of king during the lifetime of his father, Alfonso

VII. Twelfth-century monarchs often designated an heir in this way, establishing a son's royal authority well in advance of the moment when he would have to assert it on his own.¹⁸ To make clear that he was still subordinate to his father, however, Sancho's diplomas included a formula of consent similar to those that appear in Fernando III's diplomas. Its most common form is "with his [Alfonso VII's] consent and will," *cum eius consensu et uoluntate*.¹⁹ This is similar in meaning to the *ex assensu et beneplacito* formula with which Berenguela ratified her son's diplomas. Alfonso VII's relationship to Sancho III and Berenguela's to Fernando III are not an exact parallel; for one thing, Alfonso VII had taken the title of emperor (*imperator*) while Sancho was merely a king (*rex*). The titles themselves demonstrated the two men's unequal status. Berenguela's title was simply *regina*, queen, the grammatical equivalent of Fernando's *rex*. Yet the chancery's use of a formula so like the one employed by Alfonso VII implies that Berenguela was taking a similarly supervisory, albeit not similarly dominant, role in her son's acts.

A second twelfth-century case of the use of such formulas comes from the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, where Queen Melisende had inherited the throne in her own right and understood herself to be a reigning queen. Her husband, Fulk of Anjou, understood differently; but the royal couple eventually came to terms under a power-sharing arrangement whose footprint appears in their diplomas. After the reconciliation, all Fulk's surviving diplomas were issued with Melisende's *assensus* or *consensus*. This textual recognition of Melisende's authority is echoed in the report of William of Tyre, the queen's partisan, that Fulk never again made even trivial decisions without consulting his wife.²⁰

Berenguela's grandmother Eleanor of Aquitaine used a comparable formula in diplomas issued by her first husband, Louis VII of France. Apart from a handful of diplomas that Eleanor issued independently, all the surviving diplomas that deal with Eleanor's own duchy of Aquitaine were issued by Louis with Eleanor's *assensus*, *assensus et peticio*, *assensus et rogatus*, or *voluntas et assensus*. Outside of Aquitaine, however, only three of Louis's surviving diplomas refer to Eleanor's consent. On those grounds, Marie Hivergneaux argues that Eleanor's approval, will, and request were not formalities, but reflected real authority over her inherited domain. She observes that Eleanor is known to have issued at least one charter with Louis's *assensus*,²¹ which certainly cannot be taken to imply that Louis's authority was fictive. Even more interesting, for our purposes, is the fact that Eleanor's formal consent was limited almost entirely to the lands under her personal dominion. Berenguela's

consent appears in Fernando III's diplomas for all of Castile—implying that all Castile belonged to her dominion.

A final point of comparison can be found in Leonese diplomas of the tenth century. At the time these documents were made, there was not yet a kingdom of Castile; they therefore represent the chancery tradition from which the diplomas of Berenguela's age derived. Collins finds that many tenth-century queens ruled either jointly with, or in a supervisory capacity over, their sons, nephews, and even grandsons. Individual charters often identify these male relatives as "reigning with" (*regnans cum*) the older queens,²² just as charters of the thirteenth century do for Fernando III and Berenguela. One such queen, Teresa Ansúrez, approved the diplomas of her son Ramiro III with a formula very similar, in both meaning and syntax, to Berenguela's approval of Fernando III's diplomas: "Ramiro, king by divine will, together with the consent of my *domina* and mother doña Teresa, the queen" (*una cum consessum domina et ienetrix mea domna Tarasia, regina*).²³ In short, the Leonese and Castilian royal chanceries had used variants of this formula for centuries to denote parental authority over the acts of a reigning son. Its application to Berenguela indicates that she held a similar authority.

The diplomatic evidence shows that Berenguela's involvement in regalian power was formal and public. It was not absolute; Fernando III did occasionally issue diplomas without her approval, so his authority was not entirely dependent on hers. Nevertheless, the wording of his diplomas acknowledges that his authority was not entirely independent of hers, either. Despite the fact that he enjoyed full regalian power, Fernando III sometimes was placed, or placed himself, in a position that implied subordination to his mother.

Two Queens of Castile

Shortly after Berenguela had made her son king of Castile, she turned her attention to making him a husband too. The most obvious reason to find Fernando III a wife was to hasten the arrival of legitimate heirs. The chroniclers, however, presented Berenguela's concern differently:

In the following year [1218] Queen doña Berenguela, whose entire intention and highest desire was to attend to the honor of her son in every way, began to discuss finding a wife for her son. But since

different people had different opinions, it pleased the queen to arrange her son's marriage with a woman who seemed to her to surpass all others in Christendom in nobility of birth.²⁴

This woman was Beatrice (in Spanish, Beatriz) of Swabia, daughter of Philip of Swabia and granddaughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa. In marrying her to Fernando, Berenguela made a new version of the alliance her father had tried to make through her in 1188.²⁵ And the CLRC is clear that it was Berenguela who arranged the match, and even took the initiative for arranging it—she began the discussion of marrying Fernando off, and when her advisors differed on the choice of bride, she made a choice dictated by her own preference. Archbishop Rodrigo concurs on this point: “But since it was unseemly that such a great prince should be drawn into immoderate wantonness, his mother, who always wanted to guard him from illicit things, found him a wife named Beatriz.”²⁶

Medieval kings' marriages are rarely said to have been arranged for the sake of chastity. An exception is Fernando III's cousin, Louis IX of France, whose powerful mother—Berenguela's sister Blanche—also reportedly sought to preserve her son's virtue through wedlock.²⁷ While this may point to some stringent idea of kingly virtue acquired by both sisters (it is notable that Alfonso VIII, like both Fernando III and Louis IX, is not known to have fathered any illegitimate children), it also savors of ecclesiastical revisionism. Despite their respect for Berenguela and their open acknowledgement of her authority, Archbishop Rodrigo and Juan of Osma tend to cloak her more explicit acts of power in the language of piety.²⁸ Thus her decision and ability to arrange the king's marriage is presented as moral concern; her transmission of royal power to Fernando at Valladolid is called the result of modesty; and her principal role in the treaty that resolved the Leonese succession crisis in 1230 is attributed to her desire to shield the kingdom's poor from the evils of warfare. While Berenguela may have been a deeply pious woman, it is unlikely that she did these things solely for their religious advantages.

Berenguela sent ambassadors to discuss the marriage with Beatriz's guardian, the Holy Roman Emperor-elect Frederick II. Having received a favorable response, she dispatched her ally Mauricio, bishop of Burgos, to settle the arrangements and bring Beatriz back to Castile. In a 1221 diploma granted to Mauricio as a reward for the labors and expenses he incurred on this journey, we find the only surviving evidence that Fernando was an active participant in negotiating his marriage: Mauricio, the diploma says, went to

Germany “at my command and that of my most cherished mother.”²⁹ But the chronicles remain silent about Fernando III’s role. When Beatriz reached Castile, it was Berenguela who met her at the border town of Vitoria. From there, the women proceeded to Burgos, where Fernando III awaited them.³⁰ Burgos was to be the site of three conjoined ceremonies of tremendous significance: Fernando III’s wedding, his knighting, and a *curia plena*.

Coronation ceremonies were atypical among Iberian monarchs. Fernando III had become king of Castile by virtue of public acclamation and the homage done him at Valladolid (and his and Berenguela’s successful prosecution of the succession war).³¹ But Castilian and Leonese kings *were* formally knighted, and Alfonso IX’s experience at the Curia of Carrión in 1188 had shown how much symbolic freight that act could carry. Accordingly, Fernando III’s knighting was carefully planned to denote his independence from any earthly authority—or almost any.

For a king, the ceremony of knighthood held two dangerous moments. The first was that the new knight customarily received a sword from his lord, who then buckled the weapon, in its sword belt, onto his vassal’s waist. This was the act that Alfonso VIII had performed for Alfonso IX in 1188, and it symbolized the king of Castile’s lordship over his younger cousin. Fernando III evaded any similar hint of subjection by taking his sword from the altar of Las Huelgas with his own hand, as the chronicles are quick to report, and buckling the sword belt himself.³² In doing so he signaled that he recognized only God’s authority as superior to his own. This appears to have been an innovation in Castilian royal ceremony, one that his descendants would emulate;³³ but it was not the only innovation of the day.

The second dangerous moment in a king’s knighting was the unbuckling of his sword belt. This “quasi-sacrament” was the duty of the new knight’s *padrino*—sponsor, or godfather—and it signaled that the knight was bound to his *padrino* by a range of obligations, less absolute than lordship but still more onerous than a king might wish to accept.³⁴ It is thus remarkable that at Fernando III’s knighting, it was Berenguela who unbuckled his sword.³⁵ The *Siete Partidas* explains that “just as they [new knights] are bound to obey and honor those who give them the order of knighthood, so also are they bound to obey and honor the *padrinos* who confirm it.”³⁶ The peculiarity of this “confirming and granting” being done by a woman is illustrated in the *Setenario*’s discussion of baptism, which is equated with knighthood:

if he himself [the baptismal godparent] has not received baptism, then until he receives it he must not give it to another, this being

shown by natural reason; for no one can give what he does not have. And temporal knighthood gave us an example of this; for since no one can give knighthood if he has not already received it, how much more is this true in the spiritual knighthood of the sacrament of baptism.³⁷

The echo of the *nemo dat quod non habet* that was later invoked in France to prevent royal succession in the female line makes clear that women, who could not themselves be knights, therefore could not “confirm and grant” someone else’s knighthood. Nevertheless, Berenguela did exactly that.

The *padrino*’s act was a conferral of status, a sharing: a man did not surrender his own knighthood in the process of granting another’s. In the eyes of contemporaries, Berenguela’s act made a specific statement about her formal relationship with Fernando. In the course of a ceremony that proclaimed his sovereign independence of any authority but God, the king nevertheless recognized that his mother held power of her own in Castile, and that he owed debts and obligations to her even as she conferred similar power upon him.³⁸ It was, in effect, an accurate portrayal of their relationship as monarchs.

On November 30, 1219, three days after he was knighted, Fernando III married Beatriz in the cathedral at Burgos, with Bishop Mauricio as their celebrant. Fernando and Berenguela then presided over a curia held in the same city.³⁹ In the diplomas he issued that December, during or just after the curia, Fernando III acted “together with” (*una cum*) his new wife and his brother Alfonso, still his heir; he also acted, as ever, by Berenguela’s “agreement and approval” (*assensus et beneplacitum*). Berenguela herself issued an independent diploma for Las Huelgas at this time; she gave the monastery certain houses she owned in Burgos and received others from the abbess in exchange.⁴⁰ Her diploma included Fernando III’s confirmation and seal, which again emphasizes that ultimate sovereign power lay with him—her acts, even those regarding her own property, carried more weight when ratified by the king. Yet her presence at the curia and in Fernando’s own diplomas demonstrates that her reginal rights had not been infringed by the arrival of a new queen-consort.

Castile now had three monarchs, a king and two queens, each of whom differed from the others in the scope of his or her authority. It is necessary now to turn away from the symbolic acts of monarchy, such as the acclamation at Valladolid and Fernando III’s knighting at Burgos, to observe this complex partnership in practice.

Clients of the Queen

As in León, Berenguela extended patronage to certain nobles in Castile, often with impressive results. Their prominence at the royal court was a consequence—and also a reinforcement—of Berenguela's own.

Berenguela's majordomo confirmed royal diplomas, with his title, from the beginning of Fernando's reign.⁴¹ It had been unusual that Berenguela's majordomo did this while she was queen-consort in León; it was at least as unusual now. Although Fernando's wife, Beatriz, also had her own majordomo,⁴² he never confirmed the king's diplomas; and once Beatriz became the second queen of Castile, the man who had formerly confirmed as "the lady queen's majordomo" began to specify that he was "Queen doña Berenguela's majordomo." Moreover, although Berenguela's majordomo began by confirming royal diplomas in next-to-last place, signaling that his status was inferior to that of all the other confirming nobles except the merino mayor, he slowly rose through the ranks. By the mid-1220s he was regularly confirming seventh, ahead even of such luminaries as Suero Téllez de Meneses.⁴³

Just as the office of king's majordomo was occupied by Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón throughout these years, the office of queen's majordomo was held by a single man, García Fernández de Villamayor. Not surprisingly, he was a noble of the Tierra de Campos; he was also the son of Fernando García, the Castilian who had been Alfonso IX's majordomo during Berenguela's marriage. And he had his own record of service to the Castilian royal family. In a 1218 privilege, Fernando III rewarded "my beloved" García Fernández "for the many and welcome services that you long and faithfully performed for my most serene grandmother doña Leonor, as well as for doña Berenguela, my mother."⁴⁴ When García Fernández temporarily left Berenguela's service in the later 1220s, Fernando III took him on as his own majordomo; the queen's patronage had evidently done the Villamayor family well.⁴⁵ But even as Berenguela's majordomo, García Fernández enjoyed considerable authority in the court. In 1220, Fernando III confirmed a judicial sentence that had been made by his own and his mother's majordomos, Gonzalo Rodríguez and García Fernández, following a joint inquiry.⁴⁶ Such investigations were not normally the province of a royal majordomo; they were handled instead by a lower-ranking noble, the merino mayor.⁴⁷ But this case was a significant one, since it involved the king's *alférez*, Lope Díaz de Haro. The majordomos may have been assigned to it as a mark of particular royal attention. The pairing of García Fernández and Gonzalo Rodríguez

shows Berenguela's majordomo playing a role parallel to that of his kingly counterpart, and argues his significant involvement in royal administrative affairs.

Another of Berenguela's protégés at court was Juan, a native of the region of Soria near the Castilian-Aragonese border.⁴⁸ Little is known about his early life, but he had made his way to court before Berenguela's father died, and perhaps had found work in the chancery.⁴⁹ Berenguela may already have taken him into her service by 1215, when she issued a diploma that identified one "Juan the scribe" as her chancellor.⁵⁰ In any case, when Berenguela and Fernando III began to assemble a royal court, Berenguela appointed Juan as chancellor there.⁵¹

Juan's status as chancellor, like the status of García Fernández as the queen's majordomo, was unusual. He began immediately, and regularly, to confirm royal diplomas. During the reigns of Alfonso VIII and Enrique, chancellors had appeared in diplomas only at the very end of the text, in a kind of dating formula that included the name of the notary and scribe who had created the document: "Pedro Ponce, the lord king's notary, ordered Pedro the scribe to write this, Diego García being the chancellor."⁵² But Juan confirmed in the same way bishops and nobles did: "Juan, the king's chancellor, abbot of San Andrés, confirms."⁵³ He also assumed a more dignified position than that of previous chancellors; from the beginning of Fernando III's reign, Juan's confirmation appeared at the end of the list of bishops, despite the gulf between his rank and theirs.⁵⁴

Two years after Juan's appointment as chancellor, the abbacy of the collegiate church of Santa María la Mayor de Valladolid fell open. It had become almost customary for the monarch to choose Valladolid's abbot from among his court clerics; the three previous occupants of the office had belonged to the court and household of Alfonso VIII, and at least two of them had been employed in his chancery.⁵⁵ Moreover, the canons of Valladolid had no reason to elect Juan on their own. He had never been one of them; indeed, he appears to have had no preexisting ties to Valladolid at all. Berenguela used her influence there on behalf of her client, enriching the man she had made chancellor with a prime benefice in the town she controlled. For Valladolid was still firmly in her hands. Charters from 1219 again indicate a "queen's merino" in the town, and one of these charters itself identifies Berenguela as "the *domina* of Valladolid."⁵⁶

Juan served as abbot of Valladolid from 1219 until his election as bishop of Osma in 1231. During that period, Fernando III commissioned him to

write the work that has made him famous—the CLRC.⁵⁷ Its praise for Berenguela acquires new meaning as the work of one of the queen's clients, whom she had already lifted so high and whom she would later lift still higher. Her favor for him, and her recommendation of him to Fernando III, eventually made him one of the reign's most influential clerics, in a class with Berenguela's other allies Archbishop Rodrigo, Bishop Mauricio of Burgos, and Bishop Tello of Palencia.⁵⁸

At least one of Fernando III's merinos mayores during this period was also linked to Berenguela. This was Fernando Ladrón, a native of the region of Burgos—a city with which Berenguela had close associations. Besides having a background of obligations and fidelities to Berenguela's clients,⁵⁹ Fernando Ladrón had appeared as Enrique's merino mayor in the court Berenguela's partisans imagined for themselves in 1215.⁶⁰ He had therefore been associated with the queen long before he actually became merino mayor in 1221, and it appears that Berenguela recommended or appointed him to fill the post in which she had hoped to place him six years earlier. Once again, Berenguela's patronage proved valuable to the kingdom's nobles, a means of access to the highest levels of power.

Once again, too, Berenguela's personal lordship played a significant role in her patronage. She continued to hold independent authority in many of her former arras properties in the Tierra de Campos, just as she had done in the later years of Alfonso VIII's reign. Her presence in the Tierra de Campos is a reminder of the ongoing tensions on the Castilian-Leonese border—tensions that Berenguela was best positioned to negotiate, and to exploit.

For many of the properties that Berenguela had acquired from Alfonso VIII and Alfonso IX, no records of tenancy survive from this period. In other cases, however, Berenguela had clearly retained her previous possessions. Valladolid is one example. Another is Castroverde, which she received in the Donation of Burgos (1207); in 1225, she was *dominans* there.⁶¹ In 1221, she held Villalpando, which Alfonso IX had granted her in the Treaty of Valladolid (1209); in 1227, a charter names her *domina* ("sennora") of Villalpando, with Lope Díaz de Haro as her tenant and none other than Álvaro Fernández de Lara, son of the late Count Fernando Núñez, as his proxy.⁶² She had kept Bolaños too, for in 1229 she issued an independent diploma granting it to the Order of Calatrava, "with the agreement and approval (*consensus et beneplacitum*) of my dearest sons, don Fernando, the illustrious king of Castile and Toledo, and Infante don Alfonso." The diploma was confirmed by the same bishops and nobles who confirmed Fernando III's diplomas in that

period.⁶³ Fernando and Alfonso had to approve the donation, since according to the Treaty of Cabrerros (1206) Bolaños was supposed to pass to Berenguela's eldest surviving son after her death. But Fernando III also issued a separate diploma to confirm his mother's act, and to renounce any claim to the royal tributes of *pecho* and *pedido* in Bolaños.⁶⁴ While the king's intervention suggests that Berenguela's act was incomplete without his sanction, Berenguela's diploma refers to Bolaños as "my town," *villam meam*. This language implies that Bolaños—and therefore, perhaps, other towns that she had acquired in a similar way—had passed into her personal demesne, tied to the crown but independent of it for her lifetime.⁶⁵

Berenguela's possession of Valencia, which she had initially acquired as part of her arras and which was then confirmed to her in the Donation of Burgos, is particularly well documented. Charters from nearly every year between 1218 and 1230 show her in control of Valencia; by 1230 the cartulary language for her authority in the town had changed from *dominans* to *regnans*, reigning.⁶⁶ It was not an inappropriate term. In 1224, she issued an independent diploma that exempted the people of Gusendos—part of Valencia's demesne—from all royal tribute. Unlike her donation to the Order of Calatrava, this privilege to Gusendos was confirmed by Fernando III only in 1251, well after Berenguela had died.⁶⁷ The fact that the king's confirmation at that date made no mention of any previous confirmations indicates that there were none; kings frequently reconfirmed their own confirmations, but acknowledged that they were doing so. This means that the people of Gusendos did not consider it necessary to add Fernando III's authority to Berenguela's diploma until the queen herself was no longer there to enforce it. Her power to exempt Gusendos from all royal tribute is a reminder that she had received full regalian rights in Valencia through the Donation of Burgos. The royal tribute, like many other perquisites, was therefore hers to dispose of as she pleased.

When we have records of Berenguela's tenants during this period, they tend to be her usual allies. In 1225, one Rodrigo Rodríguez was tenant of Castroverde "under the queen's hand," *sub manu regine*;⁶⁸ this was most likely Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón, Berenguela's longtime partisan. And in 1221, Valencia's tenant was Lope Díaz, probably Lope Díaz de Haro again.⁶⁹ But the best-recorded of them is an otherwise poorly documented man named Morán Pérez.

Morán Pérez must have been a past client of Berenguela's; she entrusted her castle of Valderas to him in 1218 as a guarantee of peace between Castile

and León.⁷⁰ But Alfonso IX evidently esteemed him too, for he served as the king of León's proxy *alférez* in the early 1220s—on behalf of the Castilian noble Álvaro Pérez de Castro, who had temporarily left his high position at the Castilian court to seek his fortune in León.⁷¹ By 1224, Morán Pérez had acquired the tenancy of Valencia “under the queen's hand,”⁷² and retained it through at least 1230.⁷³ His possession of Valencia, whose tenancy was substantial enough to have been conferred on Lope Díaz de Haro in the past, helped raise his family to greater prominence. His son, Gonzalo Morán, was tenant of the city of León in the 1240s, became *merino mayor* of the kingdom of León, and loyally served Alfonso X during the noble rebellions of the early 1270s.⁷⁴ Morán Pérez and his family are an example of “domestic dynasties” in royal service, clients whose loyalty to one monarch earned their descendants similar positions of trust in subsequent royal households.⁷⁵ Berenguela's patronage had significantly raised their status.

Noble Rebellions

Not all relations between the crown and the nobility during Fernando III's reign were so warm. Between 1214 and 1217, various factions of Castilian magnates had had considerable success in shaping the monarchy to their preferences. Once Berenguela's faction had prevailed in 1217, the Lara and their supporters were largely excluded from power. The only way for them to regain the influence they had enjoyed during Enrique's reign was to create a monarchy more favorable to them. By 1218, the new king already faced a rebellion from the Lara counts, backed by the kingdom of León. And although this rebellion failed, it had lasting resonance. Subsequent revolts in the 1220s can be traced to the noble faction represented by the Lara. But these disturbances also included longtime supporters of Berenguela and Fernando III, including Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros—and even the archbishop of Toledo.

THE LARA REBELLION AND WAR WITH LEÓN

By the end of 1217, Fernando III and Berenguela had decisively defeated the Lara brothers. Their tenancies had been confiscated, and all three brothers left Castile for León, where they were confirming diplomas by September 1217.⁷⁶ Fernando Núñez did reconcile briefly with the new rulers of Castile;

he appears at their court for a few months in 1218.⁷⁷ Álvaro and Gonzalo Núñez, however, could not resign themselves to their meteoric fall from power. They launched a new rebellion in the summer of 1218, and by early August, Fernando Núñez had left the Castilian court to join them.⁷⁸ As in 1217, Fernando III and Berenguela together led an army to the Tierra de Campos to confront the rebels. At the monarchs' approach, the Lara withdrew to León, where they sought and gained Alfonso IX's assistance.⁷⁹ The Lara rebellion was becoming another Castilian-Leonese war.

Castilian nobles who had been raiding in Salamanca were pursued back across the border by Alfonso IX's advancing army, which laid siege to Castrejón, near Medina del Campo. Stopping Castilian border raids may have been one reason for Alfonso IX to go to war, but it was no reason to get involved with the Lara. Clearly he still cherished hopes of becoming the new king of Castile, with the backing of the Lara counts and their like-minded peers.

Those hopes, however, were not long-lived. After Alfonso IX besieged Castrejón, Berenguela and Fernando III sent him envoys in the hopes of arranging a peace, and the king of León agreed. His consent may have been hastened by external pressures, for Pope Honorius III had taken an interest in the conflict. He wrote to the bishops of Toledo, Palencia, and Burgos on August 19, reminding them that Fernando III was under papal protection and empowering them to enact ecclesiastical censures against anyone who violated that protection.⁸⁰ Alfonso IX was not in the pope's good graces; at the beginning of that year, Honorius had warned him personally to keep the peace with other Christian monarchs.⁸¹ Alfonso IX chose not to provoke Honorius further. Castile and León sealed a peace treaty in late August 1218.

The outlines of this treaty had been drafted earlier. They survive in an undated original charter that may have been created at any time between November 1217 and August 1218.⁸² Like the truce of November 1217, the draft represents an agreement between Alfonso IX and both Castilian monarchs. Again like the 1217 truce, it accords Berenguela the title of queen. This time, however, the draft specifies what Berenguela was queen *of*: "This is the truce that Alfonso, king of León, made with his son don Fernando, king of Castile, and with doña Berenguela, queen of Castile."⁸³ Alfonso IX had not previously recognized his former wife's title to Castile. His acknowledgement here points to the growing security of both Fernando's and Berenguela's claims to their kingdom.

Throughout the draft treaty, Fernando III and Berenguela act jointly. They are both bound to love Alfonso IX and be loved by him, as well as to permit Castilian volunteers to join Alfonso IX's campaigns against the Almo-hads even while Fernando III observes his current truce with them. Likewise, they both agree to pay Alfonso IX the debt of 11,000 maravedís that Castile had incurred from León during Enrique's short reign, and to surrender two hostages as a guarantee of their payment. The hostages were sons of Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón and his brother Rodrigo Rodríguez. Gonzalo Rodríguez himself, along with his fellow stalwarts Lope Díaz de Haro and Alfonso Téllez de Meneses, also agree personally to ensure that the debt is paid. Ten knights and three prelates from each kingdom are named as guarantors of the peace, and the sanctions they can impose for breaking the treaty are enumerated.⁸⁴

Yet this draft seems never to have been enacted. The treaty that the monarchs sealed in August 1218 is far simpler, and shows Berenguela's fingerprints even more distinctly. She is again "doña Berenguela, queen of Castile," as she had been in the draft, and she and Fernando III share agency and responsibility. Indeed, Berenguela arguably has more agency than her son. They again pledge to pay Alfonso IX his 11,000 maravedís; as a guarantee, they put up not hostages but Berenguela's castle of Valderas.⁸⁵

Alfonso VIII had given Berenguela lifetime possession of Valderas under the Treaty of Cabrerós. The following year, Alfonso IX had conceded or confirmed her possession of the regalian right of *yantar* there in the Donation of Burgos (1207). She was required to bequeath Valderas to Fernando III at her death, which made his consent necessary before she risked alienating the town in this treaty. But the treaty makes it clear that she, not Fernando, controls Valderas. Until the debt is paid, Berenguela and Fernando consign Valderas to the care of Morán Pérez, whom we have already seen as Berenguela's client. If Alfonso IX is paid in full within the term set by the treaty, Morán Pérez will return Valderas "freely and absolutely" to Berenguela. Otherwise, he will give it to Alfonso IX.

The treaty's final clause is meant to dismantle any status the Lara counts had acquired in León. Alfonso IX is forbidden to hinder Fernando III, "by his own actions or by advice or by his command, [in any action Fernando III takes] against the counts, or to aid or assist them or receive them in his kingdom so that they may find assistance there . . . and if they should pass through his kingdom and wish to make their dwelling there, the lord king [Alfonso IX], as soon as he knows of it, shall not permit them [to do so]."

Otherwise, Alfonso IX will lose the money owed to him, and Morán Pérez will give Valderas back to “the queen of Castile, doña Berenguela.”⁸⁶

This was intended to be Berenguela’s final blow against the Lara counts. For one of them, though, it was already unnecessary. During Alfonso IX’s siege of Castrejón, “Count Álvaro was starting to put on his iron greaves” in preparation for battle when he suddenly fell ill. He was brought to Toro in extremis, “plagued by the pain of the illness and of the truce” then being negotiated with Castile. After taking the vows of the Order of Santiago, he died.⁸⁷

Fernando Núñez and Gonzalo Núñez de Lara were still alive, however, and the 1218 treaty did nothing to dislodge them from the Leonese court. Fernando Núñez was still confirming diplomas there as late as April 1219; after this, he abandoned León and went to serve the Almohads in Morocco, where he subsequently died. Even then, Gonzalo Núñez stayed, and enjoyed Alfonso IX’s favor until 1221; he then vacillated between Castile and al-Andalus until his own death a few years later.⁸⁸

Berenguela had proven herself still adept at negotiating and manipulating the old Castilian-Leonese border conflict, and had won Alfonso IX’s reluctant recognition of her power in Castile. She had not quite succeeded in nullifying the Lara, however. Even though Fernando Núñez and Álvaro Núñez posed no further threat, their brother Gonzalo seems to have gone on encouraging unrest in Castile. In the early 1220s, there was plenty of unrest to exploit.

THE CAMEROS REBELLION

Rodrigo and Álvaro Díaz de Cameros had been Berenguela’s partisans since her marriage. They had served as tenants in her arras castles in León, and they had fought for her in the succession war against Álvaro Núñez de Lara. Since Fernando III’s accession, both brothers had been highly honored at court, consistently confirming diplomas in third and fourth place. But around 1221, Rodrigo Díaz and Fernando III came into conflict. The royal chroniclers claimed that Rodrigo Díaz had been abusing his royally delegated authority and that Fernando III called him to account.⁸⁹ More probably, Fernando III was seeking to reestablish royal power over the string of valuable tenancies—including Baja Rioja, Nájera, Logroño, and Calahorra—that the Cameros controlled on Castile’s border with Navarre.⁹⁰ When Rodrigo Díaz refused to appear before the king to defend his case, Fernando III confiscated

his tenancies. Yet Fernando III's command of royal tenancies was not yet as vigorous as that of his father, Alfonso IX, in León. Rodrigo Díaz refused to yield the fortresses he held. In order to regain them, Fernando III had to compensate Rodrigo Díaz with the princely sum of 14,000 aureos.⁹¹

Rodrigo Díaz's brother, Álvaro Díaz, remained faithful to the crown during his brother's revolt; he confirmed royal diplomas in third place throughout Rodrigo Díaz's absence.⁹² For Rodrigo Díaz, however, the rebellion had been fairly successful; he had lost his tenancies, but he had been well paid for them. Perhaps this encouraged the revolt of another discontented noble, Gonzalo Pérez de Molina, during the year that followed.

THE MOLINA REBELLION

Gonzalo Pérez was a member of the Lara family, and his seigniorship of Molina lay on the Castilian-Aragonese border, just south of the vast seigniorship of Lara itself. Along with Lara, the patrimony of the Cameros family, and the patrimony and tenancies of the Haro family, Molina was one of the most important lordships in eastern Castile—an area that Fernando III had been working for some time to bring more firmly under his control.⁹³ His dismemberment of the Lara brothers' power in Castile, his attempt to regain Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros's tenancies, and his close bonds with Lope Díaz de Haro all contributed to this program. In 1221 the situation had real urgency; the young king of Aragón-Cataluña, Jaime I, was reaching his majority, and Alfonso IX had offered Jaime a marriage to his daughter Sancha in hopes of forestalling Fernando III's bid for the Leonese crown.⁹⁴ Security on the Castilian-Aragonese border had therefore become a high priority. Gonzalo Pérez de Molina, who had never enjoyed the king's favor, may have suspected that he would be the next target of Fernando III's campaign to consolidate royal authority in the region.

He therefore sought out a powerful protector: Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the archbishop of Toledo. Archbishop Rodrigo had an interest in Molina too. He had labored over the previous few years to extend the dominions of his see eastward,⁹⁵ and the acquisition of Molina would be a tremendous coup. In the summer of 1221, he sealed an agreement with Gonzalo Pérez whereby the town of Molina became the property of the archbishop and cathedral of Toledo, and Gonzalo Pérez became the archbishop's vassal.

This charter assured Gonzalo Pérez of the archbishop's protection "from all adversaries," *ab omni molestatore*, which Ana Rodríguez López sees as primarily a reference to the king. It seems unlikely that Archbishop Rodrigo did

not know of Fernando III's goals in eastern Castile, so his motives are murky. But, whatever his intentions, he seems to have been embarrassed by their consequences; the DRH discusses Gonzalo Pérez's rebellion, but makes no mention of the archbishop's role as Molina's overlord.⁹⁶

Archbishop Rodrigo claims instead that Gonzalo Pérez rebelled at the instigation of his cousin, Gonzalo Núñez de Lara.⁹⁷ If so, this places the Molina revolt even more squarely in the context of intrigues among León, Castile, and Aragón-Cataluña, for Gonzalo Núñez de Lara was highly placed in Alfonso IX's court in 1221.⁹⁸ Unlike Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros, Gonzalo Pérez took the offensive against Fernando III, raiding across Molina's borders into royal lands. In response, "Having gathered their vassals, the king, with his most illustrious mother, went to Molina and laid waste all the lord of Molina's land"; he also besieged Gonzalo Pérez's castle of Zafra.⁹⁹ Again we see Berenguela accompanying an army on the march. Again, too, this army's purpose is to defend or claim lands within Castile; Berenguela did not accompany her son on campaigns into Almohad lands, but since 1216 she had been a regular participant in warfare against Castilian nobles who opposed her. When Gonzalo Pérez refused to surrender, and—according to the DRH—the king found that the siege of Zafra was likely to fail, Berenguela intervened: "the noble Queen Berenguela, his mother . . . arranged an agreement, and the king dissolved his army and retired from Molina with settled terms in place."¹⁰⁰

This is a far cry from the CLRC's version, which says that the siege of Zafra convinced Gonzalo Pérez to surrender because he was no match for the king.¹⁰¹ Modern scholars have debated the reason for the discrepancy,¹⁰² although none has questioned Berenguela's involvement in the conflict's resolution. The queen was a well-chosen mediator for this standoff, which pitted Fernando III not only against Gonzalo Pérez but also against Archbishop Rodrigo, as Molina's lord. At best this was an uncomfortable situation; at worst, it meant open hostility between the king and the most powerful prelate of his realm. As the king's mother and the archbishop's longtime colleague, Berenguela was best suited to navigate this difficult terrain.

The "agreement" she brokered was based in that time-honored tool of peacemaking queens, the marriage alliance. She arranged a wedding between Gonzalo Pérez's daughter and heir, Mafalda, and her own son Alfonso. The match sealed a bond between the lord of Molina and the royal family, and made Infante Alfonso the likely heir to Gonzalo Pérez's rich seigniorship—thereby giving him the prospect of wealth and lordship independent of the

crown, and bringing Molina under the king's indirect control.¹⁰³ Such a settlement also posed no threat to Archbishop Rodrigo's dominance of Molina. Indeed, Honorius III confirmed Rodrigo's possession of Molina in 1222, and in subsequent years Gonzalo Pérez appeared regularly in the archbishop's charters as his vassal.¹⁰⁴

This is not to say that Berenguela's intervention resolved all tensions between Gonzalo Pérez and his king. On the contrary, a year or two later, Gonzalo Pérez de Molina and Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros joined forces in another attempt at rebellion.¹⁰⁵ This one struck at the very foundation of Fernando III's authority—Berenguela's hereditary right in Castile.

AN INVITATION TO THE FRENCH

In the Archives Nationales de France are nine letters written to King Louis VIII and his wife, Berenguela's younger sister Blanche, during Louis's brief reign from 1223 to 1226. These letters informed Louis VIII that Alfonso VIII of Castile had intended his throne to pass to a son of Louis and Blanche, if his own son Enrique died without heirs. Louis VIII should therefore immediately send his son to Castile, where his correspondents—the scions of several major Castilian noble houses—would take up arms to set him on the throne and overthrow the “foreigner” (*alienus*) who was in power. The most prominent of these Castilian magnates were Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros and Gonzalo Pérez de Molina.

The authenticity of their letters has long been debated. However, Rodríguez López observes that historians' objections have centered on the letters' content rather than on their diplomatic or sigillographic characteristics—which offer no reason to doubt their validity.¹⁰⁶ Like the Lara rebellion of 1218, then, this conspiracy was an explicit attempt to dispose of the current Castilian monarchy and replace it with a new configuration of rulers. It was therefore a far more serious threat than either Rodrigo Díaz's or Gonzalo Pérez's earlier revolts had been. And it was aimed squarely at the legitimacy of the reigning monarchs.

The letters' most perplexing feature is the suggestion that Blanche's claim to the Castilian throne superseded Berenguela's. Some historians have even taken this as evidence that Blanche was the elder sister, though that claim is patently false.¹⁰⁷ Yet the plot to overthrow Fernando III was first of all an attempt to unseat Berenguela. It was through her that Fernando III claimed

hereditary right and legitimate descent from Alfonso VIII. To say that Alfonso VIII had excluded Berenguela from the succession, and to describe Fernando as a “foreigner,” was to reject the Castilian identity that Berenguela had tried to reclaim during her ten years as a solitary queen in her father’s court, and that she had negotiated with varying success during her regency and the subsequent wars. It was to define her not as the daughter and sister of the latest kings of Castile, but as the cast-off wife of the king of León.

To be sure, Blanche and her sons were at least as French as Berenguela and Fernando III were Leonese. But the rebels were apparently willing to overlook this quibble; their appeal was directed as much to Louis VIII as to his queen. Besides, the threat of union with France was diminished by the fact that Blanche and Louis VIII had no fewer than five living sons at the time that they ruled France. The rebels never insisted that the son sent to them should be Louis VIII’s firstborn, and a younger brother’s accession in Castile considerably reduced the risk of union between the crowns. All five French princes were underage, but so much the better; the minorities of Alfonso VIII and Enrique I had proved how much power nobles could gain in a regency.

Louis VIII was sufficiently intrigued by the rebels’ offer to have asked them for proof of their promised support. His wife, however, was likely to be less sympathetic. A combination of Blanche’s unwillingness to contribute to her older sister’s overthrow and Fernando III’s military successes after 1224 probably quashed the plot.¹⁰⁸ But these letters represent important links among the noble rebellions of Fernando III’s early reign. Many of the Castilians named in the letters had family ties to the Lara,¹⁰⁹ which suggests a connection between their planned uprising and the Lara’s earlier revolt and downfall. That connection is made more plausible by the fact that none of the nobles involved, except Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros, confirmed Fernando III’s diplomas with any regularity—although, beginning in 1224, at least one of them was confirming diplomas for Alfonso IX of León.¹¹⁰ The link between this rebellion, the Lara family, and the court of León may mean that the attempt to set up a French claimant to the Castilian throne was part of a Leonese-backed plot to forestall the union of León and Castile under Fernando III. But the failure of this series of revolts along Castile’s eastern border reveals Fernando III’s growing power, and the ultimate success of his efforts to consolidate that region—efforts in which Berenguela was significantly involved.

It was Berenguela who finally concluded a marriage between a Castilian infanta and Jaime I of Aragón-Cataluña, thereby ensuring peace on that border and thwarting Alfonso IX's intended alliance with the Aragonese. It was also Berenguela who brought the difficult negotiations among Fernando III, Gonzalo Pérez de Molina, and Archbishop Rodrigo to a successful conclusion. Marriage alliances and peacemaking were the quintessential duties of a queen. The fact that in this case they were assumed by the queen-mother rather than the queen-consort, Beatriz, may be due simply to Berenguela's larger experience in diplomacy and closer relationship to key figures such as Archbishop Rodrigo. But even if Berenguela's role was dictated by these informal considerations rather than by her formal status as an inheriting queen, it demonstrates an appreciable gap between her and Beatriz's share in royal power. Since our understanding of gender relationships in a plural monarchy comes overwhelmingly from the relationships of queens-consort with their husbands, it is valuable to contrast the scope of Beatriz's power with Berenguela's. Once again we can speak of two queenships, this time simultaneous rather than sequential, as Berenguela's and Teresa of Portugal's were in León.

The Queens at Court

A detailed comparison of Berenguela's and Beatriz's roles in Castile is difficult, since there is substantially less documentation of Beatriz's activities. This in itself suggests a distinction between them. However, there are charters and diplomas that record both women's participation in certain forms of royal lordship—judicial cases heard in the royal court, for example, or oversight of transactions and negotiations among the realm's magnates. All of them present problems of interpretation. For example, the court cases I will cite were closely connected to religious institutions in Burgos—the cathedral, Las Huelgas, and the monastery of San Juan de Burgos. Burgos's ties to the queens of Castile in general, and to Berenguela in particular, have been repeatedly emphasized in the preceding chapters. Does this—or Berenguela's own affective bonds to the bishop of Burgos and to Las Huelgas—make her more likely to have participated in cases concerning that city and those institutions? Likewise, does the fact that these cases, and the instances of royal involvement in personal negotiations, tend to involve Berenguela's clients and allies mean that she was more likely to take a hand in the affairs of these

individuals than of others? Or is this evidence simply a matter of documentary survival? The charters in question generally come from large and well-preserved archives such as those of the cathedral of Toledo. The reginal roles they describe may, therefore, reflect general practices that are less well documented elsewhere in the kingdom, rather than any personal affiliation between the queen(s) and certain individuals or institutions. Only with these caveats in mind can we reach any realistic assessment of the charters' significance.

The first court case dates from 1221. It concerned Gonzalo Pérez de Arnales, Fernando III's late merino mayor, whose heirs had quarreled with the monastery of San Juan de Burgos over the ownership of a house. An agreement between the parties was hammered out "in the palace of the bishop of Burgos," in the presence of an archdeacon and a few knights. It was then confirmed at Las Huelgas, "in the presence of King Fernando and his mother, Queen doña Berenguela, and his wife, Queen Beatriz; Mauricio, the bishop of Burgos, also being present," along with some lesser clergy.¹¹¹

The agreement reached by the disputants was validated by being confirmed before the monarchs and sealed by Fernando III. The presence of both queens was significant enough to be included in the written record of the pact; this indicates that they possessed a formal judicial capacity, complementary to the king's.¹¹² The document offers no description of how that capacity functioned; nor did the queens seal this diploma, as Fernando III did. But their attendance at the confirmation of the pact, and the written reference to it when no other secular powers besides the king were mentioned, signals that their presence was more than decorative. The fact that Gonzalo Pérez de Arnales had been a court officer might explain why the monarchs were involved in this case. But since there is no firm evidence linking Gonzalo Pérez to the patronage of either Berenguela or Beatriz, it does not seem that the queens' participation in the case was any more extraordinary than the king's. Certainly it was not unprecedented. Alfonso VII's wife Berenguela and sister Sancha were present to hear cases in the royal court, sometimes independently of the king. The roles played by Berenguela and Beatriz in Gonzalo Pérez's case were part of the heritage of Castilian royal women.¹¹³

If the queens' failure to seal this document suggests that their role was not a formal one, and that judicial authority belonged solely to the king, that suggestion is negated by a diploma issued the following year. Bishop Mauricio of Burgos had been at odds with the monastery of Covarrubias over such

issues as the monastery's method of electing its abbot and the bishop's rights of visitation. Even though the matters under debate were ecclesiastical ones, Mauricio's settlement with the monastery was reached "with the agreement and approval of our most serene lord F[ernando], the king of Castile, and of his most illustrious mother, Queen doña B[erenguela], and of his most noble wife, Queen doña B[eatriz]." All three of the monarchs then sealed the diplomas in which it was recorded: "But so that what is written above may stay valid and remain intact for all time, two documents of this kind were prepared, and sealed with the seals of the lord king and queens, and of the bishop and chapter of Burgos, and of the abbot and monastery of Covarrubias."¹¹⁴

The use of the queens' seals on a royal diploma presents a marked contrast between Castilian practice and custom elsewhere in Europe. In France, for example, Berenguela's grandmother Eleanor of Aquitaine had been the first queen to use her own seal. But she and her successors had used it only on documents that pertained to personal affairs, not on royal diplomas, which Bedos-Rezak sees as signifying a qualitative difference between their power and their husbands'.¹¹⁵ The Castilian queens' use of seals on this diploma indicates that the distinction between their authority and the king's was not as sharp as in France; it also emphasizes that Berenguela and Beatriz were formally involved in this dispute. Their seals would not have been used if the king's seal made them superfluous. Moreover, the queens' "agreement and approval," as well as Fernando's, was invoked in the case's resolution; and the diploma's language of *consensus et beneplacitum* recalls the formula used for Berenguela's consent in Fernando III's other acts. Within the plural monarchy, Berenguela and Beatriz had formal judicial authority, complementary to but separate from the king's.

Of course, the queens did not always seal documents made in their presence. The available evidence does not disclose why they sealed this one and not others. Again, though, the fact that this case did not directly touch either them or Fernando, and even the fact that it dealt with ecclesiastical matters that were only vaguely under royal jurisdiction, suggests that their authority could extend beyond their personal lordships, and partake of the broader powers of the crown's justice.

In these two cases, the queens seem to have acted more or less as equals. Yet their judicial functions were not always performed jointly. In 1222, the royal court oversaw an agreement between two of its greatest magnates, Archbishop Rodrigo and Alfonso Téllez de Meneses. Alfonso Téllez granted the archbishop four castles along the southern Castilian border; in exchange, the

archbishop set up a chaplaincy in the cathedral of Toledo, whose priests would recite Mass for the souls of Alfonso Téllez and his relatives in perpetuity.¹¹⁶ This was a generous spiritual recompense, but Alfonso Téllez wanted temporal payment too. A second charter bound Archbishop Rodrigo to pay Alfonso Téllez set installments of cash, wheat, and barley, again in return for the castles.¹¹⁷ The two charters were made on the same day and in the presence of “the illustrious don F[ernando], king of Castile, and of the illustrious doña Berenguela, his mother.”

The short list of magnates who witnessed the document includes Gonzalo Rodríguez, almost certainly the king’s majordomo; García Fernández, most likely Berenguela’s majordomo; and Rodrigo González Girón. Again, we see Fernando’s and Berenguela’s majordomos acting jointly in the resolution of a case that concerned an important royal ally. Again, too, mention is made of Berenguela’s involvement but not of Beatriz’s. The queens’ judicial authority, though shared with the king, could be exercised independently of each other. However, there is considerably more evidence of Berenguela acting without Beatriz than vice versa, which may mean that Berenguela’s judicial functions were more extensive.

Beatriz did become involved with Alfonso Téllez’s case eventually, though her participation may not have been as direct as Berenguela’s. In 1226 Fernando III issued a writ to confirm the agreement between Alfonso Téllez and Archbishop Rodrigo as it had been laid out in 1222. That writ was made “in the presence of doña Berenguela, our mother, the illustrious queen of Castile and Toledo.” The other witnesses included both García Fernández, Berenguela’s majordomo, and Pedro López, Beatriz’s majordomo.¹¹⁸ Although Beatriz was not personally present, her majordomo’s appearance among the witnesses suggests that she had assumed some role in the matter. This glimpse of the two queens’ majordomos taking part in the settlement of a dispute is especially valuable, since it appears to be the only reference to Beatriz’s majordomo in the documents of Fernando’s Castilian reign. Evidently her majordomo and Berenguela’s shared some powers, though Berenguela’s majordomo was a considerably more prominent figure.

These judicial cases allow us to observe Berenguela’s participation in the ordinary functions of the crown. She and Beatriz both had a formal part in the exercise of regalian justice, though Berenguela’s role was probably more extensive than that of her daughter-in-law. This is an important distinction, as Ralph Turner makes clear in discussing Eleanor of Aquitaine’s role during the reigns of her sons Richard I and John in England: “During their reigns,

[Eleanor] took precedence over their wives, enjoying a queen-regnant's prerogatives."¹¹⁹ Unlike her famous grandmother in England, Berenguela had a legitimate claim to the title of queen-regnant in Castile. So when Berenguela, like Eleanor, claimed precedence over her daughter-in-law, she was establishing herself as more than a consort. But in her case, the prerogatives she asserted belonged inarguably to her.

The success of Berenguela's clients and the unusually high status of her majordomo also speak to her substantial power within the monarchy. Her authority within Castile did not supersede her son's, but as an inheriting queen she had a status apart from his, and partook of an independent sovereignty. This was publicly demonstrated at Fernando's knighting. The CLRC also gives us a less formal illustration, astonishing in what it reveals about the power dynamic between Berenguela and her son.

Fernando III's First Andalusian Campaign

Fernando III is perhaps most famous for his campaigns against the Almohads, and for the spectacular territorial expansion they produced. In the early years of his reign, however, Fernando III did not campaign in al-Andalus at all. During the noble rebellions of 1217 to 1221, the monarchs' priority was to establish and secure their control of Castile; and the period from 1221 to 1224 offered time for the royal fisc to recover from the demands of those rebellions. Castile was at peace with the Almohads, under a truce that had been renewed more or less continually since Las Navas de Tolosa.¹²⁰ But in 1224, the death of the Almohad caliph al-Mustansir, who had no adult sons, sparked a succession crisis and a series of rebellions throughout al-Andalus. The Castilians saw an opportunity for military gain among the divided and distracted Almohads. It seemed a likely time for Fernando III to take up his predecessors' sacred pursuit.¹²¹

The CLRC gives substantial attention to this decision. While it cannot be taken as literal truth, Juan of Osma's account reveals much about the court's operations and how they were perceived. In the CLRC, the campaign is Fernando's idea, but Berenguela's decision:

One day, when the spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, the king, unexpectedly, humbly, and devoutly, as an obedient son,

spoke in this manner in the presence of his most noble mother, with all the magnates standing by:

“Most dear mother and most sweet *domina*, of what use to me is the kingdom of Castile, which your generosity abdicated and conceded to me even though it was due to you by right; of what [use to me is] the most noble wife brought from distant lands through your solicitude and diligence and united to me in marriage with indescribable honor; of what [use to me is it that] you anticipate my desires with maternal sweetness and carry them out to most distinguished effect before I have fully conceived them, if I am numbed by idleness, if the flower of my youth is withering without fruit, if the light of royal glory . . . is being extinguished and annihilated? Behold, almighty God reveals the time when—unless I want to ignore it like a cowardly and idle man—I can serve the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom kings reign, against the enemies of the Christian faith. . . . Peace has been restored to us in our kingdom; among the Moors, there is discord and deadly enmities, and factions and quarrels have broken out again. . . . What else is there to say? Most merciful mother, from whom, after God, I hold whatever I have, I beg that it may please you that I go to war against the Moors.”¹²²

The CLRC was written for Fernando; the king must not have found anything objectionable in its portrayal of him. Yet that portrayal is of a king wholly subject to his mother. In spite of his assertion that Berenguela “abdicated” Castile to him, Fernando speaks to her “humbly,” “as an obedient son,” even though by 1224 he was twenty-three and had children of his own. He acknowledges that she gave him both his wife and his kingdom, which by right belonged to her. He also suggests that she, not he, is the one who manages the crown’s daily affairs, since she anticipates his intentions and enacts appropriate policies before he even understands what he wants. He names God and Berenguela as the source of all his power. Finally, he “beg[s] that it may please” her that he go to war. In other words, he asks her permission.

This passage has been interpreted as the moment when Fernando assumed full authority over his consolidated kingdom, and Berenguela’s influence began to decline.¹²³ In the light both of the text itself and of the evidence for Berenguela’s involvement in Fernando III’s reign, such interpretations

seem inadequate.¹²⁴ Fernando's recognition and unaltered acceptance of Berenguela's superior authority is obvious. I say *unaltered* because the text gives no suggestion that Fernando, having acknowledged his debt to his mother for bringing him this far, now plans to assert his independence of her. The purpose of the speech is to get Berenguela's consent for an undertaking that Fernando has devised, but cannot carry through without her.

That need to ask permission suggests that Berenguela's "agreement and approval" in Fernando III's diplomas was not merely formulaic, and that Berenguela retained significant authority in her own right. The chronicle's account therefore dovetails with the documentary evidence I have already discussed. But what is particularly remarkable is the CLRC's nonchalance about the whole business. This episode receives attention because Fernando III is embarking on his first campaign in al-Andalus; his need for Berenguela's approval is unremarkable to the author, except as an opportunity for rhetorical flourish. It is equally unremarkable to the rest of the court, as Berenguela's reply to her son demonstrates:

The noble queen, seeing that her son's heart was inflamed and ignited with such a noble desire, spoke a few words to her son, as was her custom:

"Most sweet son, you are my glory and my joy. I have always desired your perfect happiness and success from the bottom of my heart, and I have done as much as I could to bring it about. Your vassals are waiting; the court is present. Let them counsel us as they are obligated to do, and you shall follow their advice in this matter."

At the magnates' request, the king withdrew for a short time, while they remained with the noble queen. After a brief discussion and deliberation, all agreed on the same decision: that the king should go to war with the Saracens by all means. When the king learned his mother's will and heard the magnates' response, he exulted in the Lord more than could be believed.¹²⁵

Berenguela's reply claims less blatant power than Fernando's request attributes to her; she speaks moderately of having "done as much as I could" to procure Fernando's success. She then refers him to the magnates of the court, whom she describes as his vassals, although they evidently owe the vassal's duty of counsel to both monarchs: "Let them counsel *us* as they are obligated to do." Finally, she directs Fernando to abide by the magnates' advice.

Conveniently, the CLRC mentions some of the individual magnates who were at court for this event: Lope Díaz de Haro, Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón, Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón, and Alfonso Téllez de Meneses are identified specifically, although “almost all the magnates of the kingdom” were present too.¹²⁶ These magnates actually ask Fernando III to leave the room while they discuss—with Berenguela—whether to go to war. When they agree to launch the campaign, the chronicler calls the verdict “the magnates’ response,” but “[Fernando’s] mother’s will (*uoluntas*).” The four men whose involvement is particularly noted by the CLRC had been among Berenguela’s principal allies since at least 1217. Their role here as the queen’s advisors, along with their previous association with Berenguela, “reinforces the idea that they belonged to the noble circles closest to Berenguela and not *stricto sensu* to those of the king.”¹²⁷

None of this is presented as extraordinary or inappropriate. Rather, the chronicler seems to regard the whole affair as common procedure—again, remarkable in this case only because of the momentous decision to attack the Almohads. Indeed, Fernando’s request and Berenguela’s reply are the only two examples of direct speech in the CLRC,¹²⁸ which underscores the significance of this event. As we have seen and will continue to see, the CLRC contains many more reports of Berenguela advising or directing her son; yet these are not highlighted with direct speech, as they would be if Juan of Osma meant to focus attention on Berenguela’s relationship to Fernando rather than on the campaign.

The DRH’s account of this event is less detailed than the CLRC’s, but the two chronicles agree that Berenguela guided Fernando to attack the Almohads. In Archbishop Rodrigo’s view, however, she did not merely respond to Fernando’s request, but rather took the initiative: “But because the noble Queen Berenguela, the king’s mother, wanted him to be a stranger to violence among Christians, she wished to consecrate the first fruits of his knighthood to the Lord, and refused to let the truce with the Arabs be prolonged further.”¹²⁹ As she had sought to protect him from sexual incontinence by marrying him to Beatriz, she now sought to direct his military energies against a permissible (Muslim) enemy rather than against the other Christian kingdoms of Iberia. Again, Berenguela may have been partly motivated by concern for Fernando’s salvation, but the fact that 1224 offered the first and best opportunity for Castilian success against the Almohads cannot be discounted.

The exceptional nature of these passages in the CLRC and DRH is thrown into sharp relief by their counterpart in the PCG:

And the noble Queen doña Berenguela, the mother of King don Fernando, with love and great tenderness toward her son, wanting to hinder him from going to avenge the damages that the Moors were causing him, made him consecrate to God—as the history says—the beginnings of his knighthood, and prolong his truce with the Arabs, and did not let him leave for there [the south]. But in the end, King don Fernando, having the campaign against the Moors in his heart, set out with his great army.¹³⁰

Here, suddenly, Berenguela is trying to prevent Fernando from undertaking his campaign, and Fernando must shake off her restraint in order to carry out his plans—exactly the opposite of the episodes in the CLRC and DRH. “The manipulation of this passage seems undeniable,” and probably reflects a growing discomfort with reginal authority over the next century or so.¹³¹ The PCG is usually respectful toward Alfonso X’s grandmother, in whose presence that king had grown up. But its goal was to exalt his father, and this is an early example of Berenguela’s memory being sacrificed to Fernando III’s legend.

The reflection of Berenguela’s power in the contemporary chronicles, however, reveals two important points. The first is that both Fernando III and the Castilian nobles continued to recognize Berenguela as a royal authority in her own right well into Fernando’s reign. She even retained some control over her son’s actions and decisions; he could not always carry out his plans without her approval, yet her decisions could be made independently of him, sometimes in separate consultation with the magnates of the realm. The fact that the CLRC attributes such powers to Berenguela suggests that her role in the plural monarchy may have been even more extensive than the documentary evidence lets on. Certainly it was more extensive than that of Beatriz, who never appears in the chronicles as an advisor to her husband.

The second point is that Berenguela’s influence extended to military affairs, an area not always friendly to queens. She remained engaged in the southern campaigns for the rest of her life, staying in close contact with Fernando even though she herself was not on the battlefield. During Fernando III’s siege of Capilla in 1226, some of his nobles advised him to lift the

siege in favor of other military goals. “Nevertheless, the king himself, following the counsel of his wise mother, who had advised him not to withdraw from the siege for any reason until he had taken the castle, remain[ed] firm and constant in his intention.” Ultimately he captured Capilla, and then in triumph “returned to Toledo to his mother.”¹³² Berenguela’s involvement in warfare indicates that the scope of her queenship was not limited to affairs within Castile. Her authority was felt and recognized outside the kingdom’s borders as well as within them.

“All That Is Agreed Between Us and You”: Berenguela’s Authority Beyond Castile

Given Berenguela’s lordship on the Castilian-Leonese border, it is no surprise that she was a major figure in the resolution of conflicts between Alfonso IX and Fernando III—especially the conflicts at the beginning of her son’s reign. This was the part she had played ever since her marriage, sometimes through diplomacy and sometimes through warfare. But a variety of foreign powers besides León dealt either with Berenguela alone or with Berenguela and Fernando III jointly. Their recognition shows that Berenguela’s authority as queen of Castile was formal and legitimate, not merely an informal arrangement within the Castilian court or kingdom.

The Queen, the Crown, and the Church

We have already seen Berenguela’s wide-ranging influence in royal match-making, both for her sons and for Jaime I of Aragón-Cataluña. But arranging marriages, even international ones, was the duty of any queen. Far more telling are the cases in which foreigners recognized Berenguela’s power in contexts that were not normally the province of royal women. One such context was the interactions of the Castilian crown with the Church.

Around 1220, the Aragonese bishop of Tarazona and the Navarrese abbot of Irache wrote to Castile’s prelates and clergy. Pope Honorius III had appointed them as his judges-delegate to resolve the bishop of Calahorra’s claim of jurisdiction over the monastery of Santa María la Real de Nájera. Nájera, a Cluniac community, countered that like all Cluniac houses it was under

the direct jurisdiction of the pope and not subject to any lesser lords. Nevertheless, the judges-delegate determined that jurisdiction over the monastery belonged to the bishop of Calahorra. The prior and monks of Nájera were furious, and “they resisted us [the judges-delegate] with a multitude of armed men.” The judges-delegate “directed our prayers to the king of Castile and the queen his mother, so that they might compel them [the monks] to desist from such great perversity through [the power of] the secular arm. And because the lord king and the queen refused to listen to our exhortations,” the judges-delegate laid Castile under interdict. They now urged the Castilian clergy to observe the interdict, until “the lord king of Castile” forced the monks to yield to the bishop of Calahorra, and make reparations for the damages they had done both to the pope and to the judges-delegate themselves.¹³³

The initial request for royal intervention—forcible royal intervention, at that—was addressed to both Fernando III and Berenguela, signifying that the power to “compel” through “the secular arm” belonged to them both. Likewise, both monarchs “refused to listen” to that request. (That was, in fact, a very polite way to describe their response; a letter from the judges to the pope in 1220 notes that Lope Díaz de Haro and his vassals were helping the monks fight off the bishop-elect’s men, indicating that the monarchs’ support for the monks was considerably more than passive.¹³⁴) It is not altogether uncommon for ecclesiastical letters to address queens as well as kings; for example, some of Innocent III’s letters about the dissolution of Berenguela’s marriage were addressed to Leonor as well as Alfonso VIII. But this was by no means invariable. Most of Innocent III’s letters were directed solely to Alfonso VIII; Leonor was included only later, when the pope found that he was making little headway with the king. As for Berenguela herself, Innocent III never addressed her directly throughout the entire exchange.

Her inclusion in this letter, therefore, represents more than mere custom. She and Fernando III both had the power to intervene, and they both opted not to use it. Berenguela’s authority as queen of Castile had been explicitly recognized by these foreign clerics. A few years later, another pope reconfirmed that authority, in a dispute over the monastery of Covarrubias.

Alfonso VIII had given Covarrubias to the cathedral of Toledo. His daughter and grandson, however, had not honored that gift. Archbishop Rodrigo of Toledo brought this complaint, along with accusations that Fernando III was appropriating ecclesiastical rents for the royal fisc, before Pope Gregory IX in 1228. Clearly the archbishop was at odds with the crown¹³⁵—

that is, with Berenguela as well as Fernando III. Gregory IX wrote two letters to the bishops of Osma and Sigüenza and the abbot of Santa María de Huerta. In one, he instructed them to persuade Fernando III to return Covarrubias to the cathedral of Toledo. In the other, he instructed them to do the same with Berenguela.¹³⁶

The language of the two letters is identical. No actions were demanded of Fernando III that were not also demanded of Berenguela; each monarch was considered to have the authority to restore Covarrubias to Toledo, and to ensure that no one else challenged the cathedral's possession of it. Gregory IX did level a calculated insult at Berenguela by referring to her as "the former queen of León," *regina quondam Legionensis*, thus denying her hereditary claim to queenship in Castile. But two days later he wrote directly to her about Covarrubias, once again using the same language he had used in writing to his ecclesiastical delegates. A letter to Fernando III followed, but only after a lapse of several months.¹³⁷

Even the pope, then, recognized Berenguela's centrality to the question whether the crown would yield Covarrubias. This may have to do with Covarrubias's position at the heart of one of the old Infantazgos, held by Berenguela's distant great-aunt Sancha and typically the province of royal women.¹³⁸ But there is little direct evidence tying Berenguela herself to Covarrubias, so Gregory IX's appeal was more likely based in Berenguela's authority over Castile as a whole.

Berenguela played a similarly prominent role in the case of the bishopric of Segovia. Fernando III had taken a hand in the administration of that see in 1218.¹³⁹ In hopes of protecting its rents from royal embezzlement, Honorius III appointed Archbishop Rodrigo to administer the see until a new bishop could be elected and confirmed. But, as usual, Rodrigo's involvement does not seem to have presented much of an obstacle to the crown. In 1222, Honorius complained that Fernando III was demanding unjust exactions from Segovia's vassals, suggesting that Fernando exercised inappropriate influence over the bishop's rents.¹⁴⁰

Thus far, it is possible that Archbishop Rodrigo was once again complicit with the crown, allowing Fernando III fiscal control over a see that was technically under archepiscopal protection. To do so, however, was not to Rodrigo's own jealously guarded financial advantage, and it should not be forgotten that the Church's objections were raised at about the same time that Gonzalo Pérez de Molina, the archbishop's vassal, rebelled against the crown. And things would only get worse. In 1224, after six years of plural

management, the cathedral chapter of Segovia elected a new bishop, Bernardo. He was duly confirmed by Archbishop Rodrigo, his metropolitan. But Fernando III declared the election invalid because the cathedral chapter had not asked his permission before proceeding. Since newly elected bishops still had to receive their temporal properties from the king, Fernando III was able to prevent Bernardo from taking possession of his see; in the interim, he kept the bishop's lands and rents under the stewardship of the crown. Honorius reprimanded him that fall, both for his unseemly obstruction of a properly confirmed bishop and for making free with that bishop's wealth.¹⁴¹ The chastisement had little effect, however, because Honorius was compelled to issue another one the following spring. This time, he addressed himself to both Fernando III and Berenguela.

The letter to Berenguela does not survive. The papal registers record it only in a notation that follows the text of the letter sent to Fernando III: "A letter of the same kind was written to Berenguela, queen of Castile."¹⁴² That language suggests that Berenguela's letter was essentially identical to Fernando III's. In contrast, the letter Fernando III received in 1224 was also sent, in modified form, to the abbot of Monsalud, in Cuenca, and to the archdeacon and treasurer of the cathedral of Toledo. The register's notation says that these clerics received letters "of *almost* the same kind . . . so that they might diligently warn and effectively induce the said king to do it."¹⁴³ If Honorius sought to bring Berenguela's maternal influence to bear on her son, that distinction would probably have been noted, just as it was for the letters sent to the clerics. If he was calling on Berenguela to play a role in the affair, but a markedly different one from that of the king, her letter likewise would not have been "of the same kind" as Fernando's. As it stands, the notation implies that Berenguela's authority over the bishopric of Segovia was very similar to her son's. It even acknowledges her with the title of "queen of Castile."

Honorius addressed both monarchs respectfully, presenting his concerns as a loving request for action rather than an imperious demand for it:

what we require of you in this matter is better obtained with the humility of tears, since we are proposing it to a devout and Catholic prince who, we believe, is ready to do many more and greater things for us and for the Roman Church. . . . Therefore we diligently ask and beseech your serenity, so that we may strive entirely not to diminish the royal honor in any way, that out of reverence for us and for God, if you are occupying any property to the detriment of

the aforesaid [bishop-]elect and his election, you freely give it to us, to your mother the apostolic see, and to him [Bernardo], to whom you must restore everything and whom you must allow to return to the church of Segovia and exercise the pastoral office there, so that we may consider you to have done a great and arduous thing for us out of the ready inclination of your own will.¹⁴⁴

Such language, addressed to Berenguela, leaves her authority in little doubt. The pope's gentle approach is a reminder that he had favored Fernando III ever since the king's accession, and that their relations had grown still warmer once Fernando began to fight the Almohads in 1224. But Berenguela had been closely involved in that relationship too, just as she had been in Fernando III's crusading efforts. If Honorius wrote to her in the same terms as to Fernando, then we can glimpse the great extent to which she had participated in Castile's interactions with the Holy See. And if the pope "diligently asked and beseeched" Berenguela to perform the "great and arduous" task of restoring the bishop's property and establishing him in his church, then he clearly considered her capable of doing these things. Since, according to the *Siete Partidas*, the grant of a newly elected bishop's properties was the responsibility of the king,¹⁴⁵ Berenguela's authority to act in this regard was that of a reigning monarch. Nor was this only true in Castile; Turner counts Eleanor of Aquitaine's intervention in episcopal elections, and successful endorsement of the candidates her reigning son favored, among her exercises of a "queen-regnant's prerogatives."¹⁴⁶

If there was daylight between the crown and the archbishop of Toledo on the question of Segovia, then the pope's letters show that Berenguela sided with her son. A few days after his initial letters to the king and queen, Honorius sought the intervention of Castilian clerics—chief among them Bishop Mauricio of Burgos, the monarchs' longtime partisan. Noting that he had heard of the crown's abuses "from our venerable brother the archbishop of Toledo and some of his suffragans," Honorius instructed the clerics to protect the bishop of Segovia so that he could finally obtain his bishopric, adding that in order to do so they would have to get Fernando III to desist in his willful and forcible occupation of the see. Here Honorius spoke only of the king's resistance. Later, though, he warned the clerics not to enact ecclesiastical penalties upon either Fernando III or Berenguela, even if they proved recalcitrant: "we do not want [ecclesiastical] censure to be extended to the king and his mother for the purpose of constraining them."¹⁴⁷ The possibility

that the Castilian clergy might punish Berenguela as well as Fernando III for withholding the see of Segovia signifies, again, that both the king and the queen had the power to grant the see, since both of them shared the guilt for not doing so. On the other hand, they also shared Honorius's protection; his displeasure with them extended only as far as reprimand, and he was not willing actually to punish them.

This attitude had predictable results: namely, that a year later Bernardo still had not taken possession of his see. In the spring of 1226 Honorius wrote again to the bishops of Burgos and Cuenca, this time admonishing Bishop Mauricio for his lackadaisical intervention with the crown. The bishops were once again charged with protecting the see of Segovia and ensuring that it was delivered to Bernardo. Yet, once again, they were permitted to censure anyone who stood in their way except the king and queen.¹⁴⁸ Although Bernardo's case had made no progress, Honorius's relationship with Fernando III and Berenguela had not cooled. He had taken them and the rest of the royal family under papal protection in 1225, meanwhile congratulating Fernando III on the success of his campaigns against the Almohads. Clearly, these wars were no small part of what had endeared Fernando to the pope. But Honorius's affection extended to Berenguela too, as did his recognition that she wielded royal power in Castile.

Fernando III's rationale for administering sees and managing monasteries—that regalian rights included authority over his kingdom's churches—was the same one used by his Capetian relatives in France.¹⁴⁹ Berenguela's ability to intervene in Church cases, and even her refusal to do so, shows that she shared in this royal prerogative of lordship over ecclesiastical affairs. Moreover, she exercised that prerogative not only in areas where she had independent authority, like the Tierra de Campos, but in places like Nájera, Segovia, and Osma, all at a considerable distance from her demesne. Yet if these places were not her own possessions, they *were* possessions of the crown. Berenguela's power of intervention in them and in their churches was the power of a ruling monarch.

"All That Is Agreed Between Us and You Should Be Respected"

In 1221, Castilian envoys went to al-Andalus to negotiate a continuation of the truce that the two realms had maintained since Alfonso VIII's victory at Las Navas de Tolosa almost ten years earlier. The truce was duly concluded,

and the Almohad vizier Abu Yahya Zakariya' wrote a letter to accompany the envoys back to Castile. But his letter was not addressed to the king. As the chronicler Ibn 'Idari records, Abu Yahya Zakariya' "wrote . . . to the queen of Castile, daughter of the king of Castile and Toledo"—that is, to Berenguela. His letter "notified her of the peace that had been concluded between him and the envoys of them [the Christians]." ¹⁵⁰

Ibn 'Idari frequently incorporates redactions of important letters into his chronicle, and he has preserved a version of this one. Although it is probably not an exact transcription of the letter that Berenguela received—and although the text as reproduced here is the product of two translations, which makes a close reading impossible—it still illustrates Berenguela's status in the eyes of the Almohad vizier:

Your ambassador has been sent back to you with what he will communicate to you about the peace—whose brilliance is resplendent—that has been arranged and agreed upon between the Almohads and you, and with the illustrious information that he will bring you. He presents you with things that you will receive from his hand as gifts, as a proof of goodwill and the fruit of friendship. All that is agreed between us and you should be respected and interpreted according to the best interpretation, God willing; with the help of God, stay within the limits of the truce, keep it, and punish all those who seek to harm Muslims, because to fulfill [a pact] is the distinctive trait of monarchs, and they are obligated to follow the paths they have set. ¹⁵¹

Abu Yahya's letter consistently confirms Berenguela as the authority behind Castile's side of the truce. The Castilian envoy is hers, and is sent back to her, to report to her the terms of the pact. It is she who receives the Almohads' goodwill gifts. Finally, the vizier attributes to her the power to ensure that the truce is observed, and to punish those who break it. These are all regal powers. On the basis of this letter and the context Ibn 'Idari provides for it, one could be led to believe that there was no other monarch in Castile—that Berenguela held sole sovereign authority.

If Berenguela had not taken the leading role in negotiating this truce, it is difficult to imagine why the Almohad vizier would have written to her and not to Fernando III. It was hardly Almohad policy to deal with Christian queens rather than kings. Yet if Berenguela had the authority to make peace with the Almohads—and we have already seen, through the CLRC, that she

had the authority to make war with them—then it is impossible to describe her power as less than that of a reigning queen. Queens-consort might negotiate with domestic rebels and navigate foreign alliances by arranging marriages, but they did not take precedence over the king in sending envoys to broker a truce with foreign princes. Berenguela's negotiations with the Almohads required the authority of a ruling monarch. Her status derived not from her association with the king, as a queen-consort's did, but from her own hereditary right. The Almohads, who would otherwise have had little reason to speak of her, much less interact with her, thus negotiated with her as the ruler of Castile.

Queen-Regnant?

Queens and other royal women frequently took part in plural monarchy, especially in Iberia. However, they assumed different roles in different situations, depending on their life stages, their marital status, and the source of their legitimacy. In assessing how both men and women participated in monarchy, terms such as *queen-consort*, *queen-regent*, and *queen-regnant* still have value. They serve as general categories within which we can compare the experiences of individual women.

Both within and outside Castile, Berenguela acted as a reigning monarch, and her contemporaries recognized her as one. That is, they understood her authority to originate with her own blood-right, rather than with her relationship to the king. (On the contrary, Fernando III depended on her for his own legitimacy as king.) This gave her a distinctive place within the monarchy—not equal to the king, whose gender gave him preeminence, but not wholly inferior to him either.

Within Castile, Berenguela's authority was qualitatively different from that of the queen-consort, Beatriz—who in any case owed her status in Castile as much to Berenguela, who arranged her marriage, as to Fernando III, who married her. Nowhere is this distinction more clearly symbolized than in Fernando III's knighting in Burgos, where Berenguela signaled her independent authority by unbuckling Fernando III's sword belt, even as she helped him take ceremonial possession of his own sovereign power. Without renouncing her own status as Enrique's heir, Berenguela conferred full kingship upon her son. In the resulting plural monarchy, Castile's two proprietary rulers shared authority, often acting in concert, but able to act separately as

inclination or necessity demanded. Berenguela heard court cases, quashed rebellions, and managed ecclesiastical affairs alongside Fernando III. She also concluded truces and consulted with court nobles independently, without her son's supervision or mediation.

Berenguela exercised regalian authority in a way that queens-consort—the most common example of women's roles in plural monarchy—could not. Not even Berenguela herself had enjoyed such powers during her marriage to Alfonso IX, despite her fairly broad interpretation of the queen-consort's role. Do her actions in Castile therefore indicate that she should be regarded as a queen-regnant, ruling in her own right?

I suggest that they do, with several caveats. Berenguela was a queen-regnant in that she inherited a kingdom in her own right and ruled it with regalian authority. However, her power could not have existed without Fernando III's. The Castilian chroniclers are right to acknowledge that Berenguela gave her son the kingdom of Castile; what they do not say openly is that he gave it back to her. Berenguela's transferral of monarchy at the Assembly of Valladolid was done because she had little chance of keeping the kingdom she had inherited unless there was a man at her side. Her predecessor, Queen Urraca, who inherited León-Castile from her father Alfonso VI, had been accepted as a reigning queen only in the context of her imminent marriage to Alfons I of Aragón. When that marriage disintegrated, Urraca faced a protracted civil war that she could manage only through an uneasy power-sharing arrangement with her own son, Alfonso VII.¹⁵² Berenguela's descendant Isabel of Castile likewise secured her claim to the crown through her marriage to, and subsequent corule with, Fernando of Aragón. Femininity remained an imposing obstacle to sovereignty; with few exceptions, reigning queens could only reign in the company of a husband or son. Berenguela's queenship depended as much on Fernando III as his kingship depended on her.

It is therefore a mistake to imagine that the status of "queen-regnant" conferred on Berenguela a power superior to her son's. He certainly acknowledged her as his superior on occasions ranging from his knighting to the creation of his diplomas, but he both acted as Castile's principal ruler and was perceived as such by his contemporaries. The dating formulas of charters from his reign nearly always name Fernando III when they name a monarch at all. His name is joined sometimes with Berenguela's, sometimes with Beatriz's, and sometimes with the names of both queens and of his battalion of sons. But the charters that name Berenguela without Fernando III, though

they exist, are few and far between.¹⁵³ As king, Fernando III took precedence over his mother, both in the popular imagination and in most royal affairs. Castile's monarchy may have been plural, but it was also unequal, and in formal terms Berenguela was not its dominant partner.

Berenguela's status as queen-regnant, then, means only that her inheritance of Castile entitled her to a formal, legitimate authority that existed independently of her son's—that is, she acquired it in her own right, not through association with him. Yet to say *only* is perhaps to diminish her significance. Queens-regnant were rare in the Middle Ages. It took an extraordinary woman to claim and hold a throne, and to negotiate the web of precedence and obligation that bound her to the man who usually shared her power. In Berenguela's case, one might say that her success required an extraordinary man as well. Her relationship with Fernando III is remarkable for its lack of obvious dissent; the two monarchs maintained a strikingly unified front over decades of shared rule. It would be foolhardy, and contrary to human nature, to imagine that they never disagreed. But whatever conflicts occurred were carefully muted in the histories of their reign.¹⁵⁴ They chose to be remembered as harmonious partners, jointly consolidating Castile's power at home and dramatically expanding its dominion abroad.

Part of that expansion was the achievement for which Berenguela is best known to history, the unification of Castile and León. Contemporary sources attribute the union solely to her. In fact, Berenguela's decade-long effort to obtain León is a case study in the possibilities and pitfalls of plural monarchy, which drew on her own long experience as queen-consort, queen-regent, and queen-regnant in Castile and León.

Chapter 6

The Leonese Succession, 1230

Fernando III's accession to the Leonese throne in 1230, which brought about the permanent union of the kingdoms of Castile and León, was in no sense a foregone conclusion. Indeed, his father had labored for over a decade to ensure that Fernando's bid for León would fail. From the resolution of the Castilian succession crisis in 1217 on, Alfonso IX set about trying to disinherit his son within his own kingdom, in order to keep the crowns of Castile and León separate. The only way to do this was to set up an heir or heirs in opposition to Fernando III—preferably, an heir or heirs whose claim to León was stronger than Fernando's.

Alfonso IX therefore turned to the children of his first marriage, to Teresa of Portugal. Teresa's children had the benefit of seniority; they were older than Fernando, and could therefore be said to have a prior claim to inherit. But the only son of this marriage (also named Fernando) had died in August 1214.¹ Alfonso IX therefore faced the challenge of establishing his daughters Sancha and Dulce as heirs to León, in opposition to a male rival whom Alfonso IX had already designated as his heir in the Treaty of Cabreros in 1206, and had recognized intermittently since then.

The series of moves and countermoves by which Alfonso IX met this challenge, and by which Berenguela sought to outmaneuver him, are the subject of this chapter. The outcome of the succession contest in León has been explained in a variety of ways—as the triumph of popular will, as evidence of the growing power of towns, as an example of medieval preference for male rulers, as an illustration of the status that came with childbearing.² But it was also a contest *of* lordship, as well as a contest *for* lordship—and most of the lords involved were women. Berenguela's strategies for power in León closely resemble her strategies for power in Castile, in their reliance on

trusted noble allies and on her possessions in the Tierra de Campos. This time, however, her victory came at the expense of other royal women who tried, and failed, to compete with her. The Leonese succession dispute is therefore a rare opportunity to observe a power struggle that was defined by its female participants. Their victories and defeats challenge assumptions about the gendered nature of medieval authority and about the ways in which women might navigate misogyny.

The Infantas of León

Sancha was the oldest of Alfonso IX's children, born probably between October and December 1191.³ Dulce's birth date is less easy to establish, but she was probably born between 1193 and her parents' separation the following year. In the late summer of 1216, therefore, when their father first moved to make them his heirs, Sancha was twenty-four and Dulce about twenty-two. Until that year, neither infanta seems ever to have been the subject of serious marriage negotiations. The reasons for this are unclear. Even if Sancha and Dulce were not likely to inherit the throne—which they decidedly were not, at least until their brother Fernando died in 1214—they should have been desirable brides for foreign princes looking to ally with the Leonese royal house. Once they did become royal heirs, of course, their marriage prospects took on new significance.

Although Alfonso IX had positioned Sancha and Dulce as his heirs in 1216, and had confirmed their status after Fernando III gained the throne of Castile the following year,⁴ his surviving diplomas do not always recognize them. This is not to say that they are absent. The infantas began to confirm Alfonso IX's diplomas—a declaration of their status as heirs—immediately after Enrique I's death made Berenguela, and through her Fernando III, the ruler of Castile.⁵ They also played a major role in the peace treaty that put an end to León's interference in the Castilian succession.⁶ The terms of that treaty place Sancha and Dulce squarely in the line of inheritance—but, apparently, with Sancho Fernández ahead of them. Had Alfonso IX considered making Sancho his heir? Sancho Fernández was then a man of high rank in León, and his claim to the throne was arguably stronger than his nieces'; like his half-brother Alfonso IX, he was a son of Fernando II of León.⁷ When the Leonese succession came into doubt, Sancho could be forgiven for thinking

that he made a better opponent for Fernando III than Sancha and Dulce ever would.

This is particularly so given that Sancha and Dulce's succession would place not just one woman, but two, on the throne of León. Alfonso IX seems always to have insisted on giving his daughters equal rights in the kingdom; he never championed one without the other. But one king in León was far more certain to win support and defend his rights vis-à-vis Castilian rivals than two unmarried queens. So, particularly amid the events of 1217, Alfonso IX might well have entertained the idea of making Sancho Fernández his heir.

Still, this treaty is the only evidence that he ever did so. Sancha and Dulce, on the other hand, confirmed their father's diplomas at least once in 1218 and again in 1219,⁸ indicating that Alfonso IX still wished to emphasize their place in the line of succession. They also issued their own diploma on October 6, 1219, which was confirmed by their father the same day.⁹ While Sancho Fernández issued a charter in the king's presence on May 10, 1218, it gives no indication that he was more than an ordinary magnate—apart from the title of infante, to which he was entitled by birth, heir or no.¹⁰ The fact that Alfonso IX lent none of his authority to this charter—either by confirming it separately or by stating that Sancho Fernández acted with his consent—makes it still clearer that the charter was a personal act, not a royal one. Nevertheless, González believes that Sancho Fernández's sudden absence from Alfonso IX's diplomas after mid-June 1218—and from all individual charters after mid-August of the same year¹¹—indicates that the infante abandoned León in vexation when he realized that Alfonso IX meant, after all, to elevate Sancha and Dulce to the throne. The *Anales toledanos* do suggest a conflict between the brothers; they report that Sancho Fernández intended to go over to the Almohads, although he never quite carried his plan through. En route to Seville, Sancho went hunting and was killed by a bear on August 25, 1220.¹²

His death removed Fernando III's last male rival for the throne of León. If Alfonso IX had not wholeheartedly endorsed Sancha and Dulce's claims before, he had to do so now. But was this really a last resort? Alfonso IX's support for his daughters as heirs had been fairly consistent since 1217. As in that year's treaty with Castile, they are acknowledged as León's heirs—this time with no mention of Sancho Fernández—in Alfonso IX's 1219 treaty with Afonso II of Portugal, the Treaty of Boronol.¹³ Its terms state that if Alfonso IX dies before Afonso II, the king of Portugal must keep the treaty with "the

daughters of the king of León, Infantas Sancha and Dulce,” as he had with their father.¹⁴ In March 1221, Alfonso IX’s agreement with the cathedral of León again recognizes them as his heirs, making its terms incumbent on the king “in my lifetime or that of my daughters, Infanta doña Sancha and Infanta doña Dulce, after my death.”¹⁵ And that November, Sancha and Dulce co-issued an agreement with don Gil Manrique that, like the pact with the cathedral of León, was to be kept with them after Alfonso IX died.¹⁶

The infantas also corroborated or co-issued royal privileges or donations.¹⁷ In 1221 they corroborated Alfonso IX’s diploma to the council of Oviedo: “We, Infanta doña Sancha and Infanta doña Dulce, grant and ratify and confirm this donation of our father, the illustrious king of León.”¹⁸ The following year, they co-issued his donation to the monastery of San Pelayo de Oviedo, specifying that they acted “for the remedy of our souls and those of our parents,” which implies an unusual degree of agency.¹⁹ Although Alfonso IX issued many more diplomas without his daughters than with them during these years, their absences should not be taken to show that he was ambivalent about making them his heirs. In fact, they were acknowledged just as frequently as his male heirs had been in the past.²⁰ Their prominence in their father’s diplomas demonstrates that Alfonso IX had indeed incorporated them into the plural monarchy of León. That decision had put other forces into play, both within León and outside of it. One of these forces was Berenguela.

Castilian Countermeasures

Berenguela had long understood that Alfonso IX planned to exclude their son from the Leonese succession. The Leonese-Castilian treaty of November 1217, with its stipulation that she and Fernando III would observe its terms with Sancha and Dulce, or with Sancho Fernández, after Alfonso IX’s death, must have been an especially bitter pill for the Castilian queen to swallow. But she and Fernando had only just secured their claim to Castile—if indeed it could be called secure yet—and did not have the strength to assert Fernando III’s rights in León at the same time. They accepted the treaty on Alfonso IX’s terms. Still, Berenguela was far from admitting defeat. She countered Sancha and Dulce’s claim with an appeal to a higher authority. On July 10, 1218, at the request of the Castilian monarchs, Pope Honorius III declared Fernando III the rightful and legitimate successor to the throne of León.²¹

Honorius was responding to a request made jointly by Berenguela and her son; he wrote of “having inclined to your [Fernando’s] prayers and those of our dearly beloved daughter in Christ, the illustrious queen B[erenguela], your mother.” Although the original petition does not survive, it is possible to infer its content from Honorius’s reply. Berenguela and Fernando had evidently referred the pope to the Treaty of Cabreros, in which Alfonso IX had declared Fernando his heir. They reminded Honorius that Fernando’s right to inherit in León had been the basis for the peace established in 1206. Not only had Alfonso freely agreed to that right, but the decision had been made with the “counsel and consent” of the prelates and magnates of both kingdoms and secured by an oath.²² The emphasis on this treaty’s role in keeping the peace between León and Castile was a reminder that fresh wars would follow on the breach of its terms. This was an argument always likely to win concessions from thirteenth-century popes; they set a high premium on maintaining peace among Iberia’s Christian monarchs, so as to promote war between those same monarchs and the Almohads.²³

Honorius evidently found the Castilians’ reasoning persuasive. In declaring that Fernando was the “*legitimate* successor”²⁴ to León, he gave the Castilian king a further advantage. Alfonso IX had made Sancha and Dulce his heirs in preference to Fernando III partly because their right to the throne could be said to supersede the claims of their younger half-siblings. However, since Rome had dissolved both of Alfonso IX’s marriages for consanguinity, his children were all canonically illegitimate. If Alfonso IX had had a legitimate child, that child’s claim to inherit should have taken precedence over those of his or her illegitimate half-siblings. But there had never been a legitimate infante of León among the king’s children—until Honorius III created one in Fernando III. Papal backing and legitimation now made Fernando’s claim to the Leonese throne impressively strong. Alfonso IX continued to refuse him recognition, of course,²⁵ but Berenguela and Fernando had acquired a formidable weapon that could be deployed at need.

The legitimization of Fernando III was a significant step in neutralizing Sancha and Dulce, but it was neither the last step nor the most important. With their father’s support behind them, the infantas of León had become an appealing marriage prize for any ambitious royal who hoped to add “king of León” to his title. If Sancha or Dulce married, thus giving the Leonese a male monarch to rally behind, Fernando III’s claim to León could easily fail.²⁶ Berenguela quickly moved to deny the infantas their most appealing marriage prospects.

In the years after Fernando III's accession in Castile, the most eligible bachelor on the Iberian peninsula was Jaume I of Aragón-Cataluña. He had come to power as a child in 1213, and his kingdom had since been racked by all the strife that usually attended a minority. Nonetheless, a marriage alliance with the Crown of Aragón was a plum prize for both León and Castile, who frequently sought Aragonese support in their battles with each other. And marriage to a crowned king would give Alfonso IX's daughters an almost insurmountable advantage in the contest for the Leonese succession.

Berenguela therefore opened marriage negotiations with the Aragonese court in 1220, when she and Fernando III had made themselves reasonably secure in Castile and as Jaume approached his legal majority.²⁷ In his autobiography, the *Llibre dels Fets*, Jaume acknowledges that she was responsible for the negotiations: "Queen Doña Berenguela, mother of King Don Ferdinand, proposed a marriage between us and her sister who was called Doña Eleanor."²⁸ Leonor, then about eighteen, was a more attractive prospect for Jaume than Sancha (who was twenty-nine in 1220) or Dulce (who was about twenty-seven). Leonor was Berenguela's only surviving unmarried sister, and Berenguela had kept her more or less at her side since their parents' death²⁹—doubtless with an eye to deploying the girl in just such a match. Her negotiations seem to have gone smoothly. The Aragonese and Castilian courts met in Ágreda on February 6, 1221, and Leonor and Jaume were married.

The marriage carried some risk. Jaume and Leonor, who shared a great-grandfather in Alfonso VII of León-Castile, were related within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, and they had not obtained a papal dispensation for their marriage.³⁰ The neglect of the dispensation, and the haste with which Berenguela moved to open negotiations as Jaume neared adulthood, makes it clear that this marriage was an urgent matter of policy for the Castilian court. But Jaume considered it no less urgent for himself. In recalling the negotiations, he explains:

We married Queen Eleanor on the advice of our men, who told us that, since our father had left no son except us, we should take a wife while young, because they greatly feared for our life, because of illnesses or poisons that might be given us. Yet, above all else, they desired that we should leave an heir, so that the kingdom should not pass from our line, because Count Don Sancho, son of the count of Barcelona, and Don Ferdinand, who was our uncle and was the

son of King Don Alfonso, both aimed to be king. Indeed, they had already fought for the kingdom in our youth when we were at Monzón. Fearing that, they advised us that we should take as a wife the daughter of King Alfonso of Castile.³¹

In choosing a queen, Jaime I not only took steps to ensure the continuation of his dynasty, but also made an alliance with a foreign ruler, who could support him amid the conflicts of the Aragonese and Catalan nobility. For that purpose, a Castilian queen was a better choice than a Leonese one. Jaime shared a border with Fernando III and Berenguela, so they could act quickly to protect his interests—which would now also be those of their aunt and sister—across his now-secure western flank. And whatever temptation the crown of León might have posed was tempered by the knowledge that if Jaime married Sancha, he would be embroiled in a nasty succession war against Castile as soon as Alfonso IX died. Castile offered a strong and immediate alliance. León offered one that was weaker, more distant, and likely to prove costly to Aragonese interests in the future. Jaime's advisors chose to safeguard their king through alliance with Castile.

Alfonso IX was not yet prepared to take his daughters off the marriage market, however. In 1224, he lured Jean of Brienne, ruler of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, to León. The CLRC says frankly that Jean “came to take to wife one of the king of León’s daughters: along with her the kingdom of León had been promised to him.”³² Jean was in the concluding stages of a rather successful tour of Europe. He had come to Rome in 1222 to receive Honorius III’s blessing, and had arranged a marriage between one of his own daughters and the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II. He had then gone to France, despite the fact that his daughter’s marriage to Frederick had earned him little favor in the eyes of the French king. In March 1224 he made a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela; while on this pious mission, he meant to arrange his own marriage in León. However, he first sent envoys to Berenguela and Fernando III, asking if he might pay them a call en route. While this courtesy suggests the Castilian monarchs’ importance on the European stage, it also suggests that Berenguela’s sister Blanche—wife of the new king of France, Louis VIII, who had succeeded his father the previous year—encouraged Jean to look for a more suitable bride in Castile.³³ If so, it is further evidence that Blanche and Berenguela were in close contact, and that the queen of France knew her sister’s stratagems and how to advance them.³⁴

Berenguela and Fernando welcomed Jean of Brienne to Toledo on April 5, 1224.³⁵ The CLRC makes it clear that Berenguela meant to give Jean a Castilian wife. It also makes clear what was at stake:

But Queen doña Berenguela, as a sensible woman with an eye to the future, foresaw the impediment that the king of Jerusalem could create for her son, King don Fernando, and his right to the kingdom of León, if the king [Jean] married either of the daughters that the king of León had had with Queen doña Teresa, and if he remained in that kingdom [León]. She decided instead to give her daughter, Berenguela by name, to the king as his wife.³⁶

Infanta Berenguela was then about twenty years old; she was the youngest of Berenguela's children, born probably in 1204.³⁷ She was also the only one eligible for marriage; her surviving sister, Constanza, was a nun at Las Huelgas. Berenguela had probably hoped to make a better match for her daughter than the middle-aged, impoverished, and often-married king of Jerusalem, but the need to protect Fernando III's interests in León trumped any future political advantages that the infanta might provide. And Jean was certainly interested; at least, before he left Toledo, "the queen promised" to marry him to her daughter.³⁸

Nevertheless, Jean seems to have hedged his bets. He left Toledo without having solemnized the marriage, and continued on to Santiago de Compostela to fulfill his pilgrimage vow. Was he planning to meet with Alfonso IX en route to compare offers? Alfonso IX was positioned for such a meeting; he was in Zamora on April 11, in Toro on April 24, and in Zamora again in his next surviving diploma, of June 2.³⁹ Interestingly, his diploma of April 24—closest in date to the moment when he and Jean might have met—was co-issued with Sancha and Dulce, which suggests an attempt to underscore their importance and increase their allure as potential brides.⁴⁰

But if Jean did visit the Leonese court, he left again unconvinced. Perhaps Infanta Berenguela's youth had won out over the declining charms of Sancha and Dulce, who were now both about thirty—well past the age when most royal women first married. Or perhaps Queen Berenguela had displayed the splendor of the Castilian court to its best advantage, using Fernando III's own youth, his already vigorous family of two young sons, and the acclaim of his nobles and prelates to persuade Jean that Sancha and Dulce could not stand in his way. Or perhaps Berenguela simply outbid her former spouse.

On his return from Santiago de Compostela, Jean met the Castilian king and queens in Burgos, and was married to Infanta Berenguela during a curia held there in May. When Jean and his bride left Castile, they took with them “lavish gifts.”⁴¹ Berenguela had accomplished her goal of forestalling Sancha and Dulce’s marriage. Alfonso IX does not seem to have tried again to find a match for his daughters.

The reasons for this are undoubtedly related to the curious fact that between April 1224—the very moment when Jean of Brienne was supposed to have married one of the infantas—and June 1228, Sancha and Dulce disappear from their father’s diplomas altogether. For four years they neither corroborated nor co-issued any of the king’s surviving acts. Why did Alfonso IX suddenly deemphasize his daughters’ status as heirs?

The infantas’ lack of marital prospects was one reason; the timing of this documentary change shows that Sancha and Dulce’s position had been seriously weakened by the failure of negotiations with Jean of Brienne. But Europe’s supply of elite bachelors and widowers was far from exhausted. Alfonso IX could still have planned another match. His apparent lack of effort in that direction suggests that the infantas’ gender and marital status were not the only, or even the greatest, obstacles to their succession in León.

The Struggle for Supporters

Sancha and Dulce represented an unusual kind of plural monarchy—two unmarried, childless queens, who would inherit jointly without any male partner in power. This was bound to provoke anxiety among Leonese elites, who would have been both eager for a male coruler (and the legitimate heirs he could father) and fretful about whether he would seize too much power at the queens’, and their own, expense.⁴² The succession crisis in Castile in 1217 had already demonstrated that elite pressures could shape and define a monarchy; in León, where a succession crisis seemed inevitable, noble and episcopal support took on corresponding importance. Clear as they were, Alfonso IX’s wishes were not enough to put his daughters on the throne. Sancha and Dulce needed a different kind of legitimacy, one that came from consensus. Berenguela herself had faced this dilemma in 1215, when her noble and ecclesiastical supporters backed away from her despite her manifest legitimacy as Enrique’s regent. Without their endorsement, the express will of her

parents lacked force. Only when a faction of magnates coalesced around her in 1217 did she have any chance to reclaim authority. In order to make good on their claim to power, Sancha and Dulce needed to build a similar faction for themselves.

Their father's gift of property to them in January 1217 had given them a means of doing this.⁴³ Most of their new domains were in Galicia, and the infantas could use their lordship there to build a network of clients and supporters just as Berenguela had done in the Tierra de Campos. Galicia was particularly fertile ground for the purpose; it was closely linked, culturally and historically, to Portugal, and the infantas not only were half-Portuguese themselves but had largely grown up in Portugal. Galicia was therefore as natural a power base for them as the Castilian borderlands were for a Castilian queen.

Alfonso IX also tried to ensure that the infantas were backed by a powerful coalition of magnates.⁴⁴ The men he most preferred had either a grudge against Fernando III or a kinship bond with the infantas. Early on, the Lara were his natural allies, and he wooed them with substantial tenancies near the Leonese-Castilian border: Asturias, Extremadura, the city of León, Salamanca, Zamora. But his greatest favors were reserved for Martim Sanches, an illegitimate son of Sancho I of Portugal—and thus half-brother to Queen Teresa and uncle to Sancha and Dulce. Martim Sanches accumulated a wealth of tenancies in Galicia, so that the infantas gained a formidable ally in their own territory.

Martim Sanches also introduced another Castilian into Alfonso IX's court—his wife's brother, Álvaro Pérez de Castro. In 1220, Álvaro Pérez, whose sister's marriage gave him an indirect personal connection to the infantas, took over the border tenancies that had been held by the Lara. By this time, Álvaro Núñez was dead, and Fernando Núñez had already abandoned León for Almohad lands. Only Gonzalo Núñez remained at the Leonese court, and even he went south the following year⁴⁵—perhaps out of pique that Álvaro Pérez de Castro had replaced him in Alfonso IX's esteem.

Alfonso IX's preferment of Álvaro Pérez illustrates the continuing importance of cognatic kinship in western Iberian society. Even a marital tie to the infantas made Álvaro Pérez an appealing ally; it reinforced the lordly bonds that already existed between a magnate and his prospective monarchs by adding a layer of affective family interest. But since this interest presumably grew stronger the more closely related the parties were, Álvaro Pérez proved

replaceable too. Upon the accession of Sancho II of Portugal in 1223, another of Teresa's brothers, Infante Pedro, presented himself in León. Unlike Martim Sanches, Pedro was Sancho I's legitimate son; unlike Álvaro Pérez, he had a direct blood tie to Sancha and Dulce, and might be expected to defend their interests with corresponding vigor. Alfonso IX received him eagerly.

By mid-1224, Infante Pedro had become Alfonso IX's majordomo, and held tenancies that gave him authority over the southern Leonese border (Extremadura and Transierra), as well as the Portuguese border (Toro and Zamora) and the city of León itself. At the same time, Martim Sanches served not only as the king's *alférez* but also as the tenant of numerous properties—including Limia, Monteroso, Sarria, and Toroño—that established him as a major power in Galicia. No Leonese nobles enjoyed such sweeping power in the mid-1220s, and few even came close. The Portuguese infantes' nearest peers were Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna, whose tenancies of Astorga, Benavente, Castrotierra, and Mayorga gave him a strong power base in the Tierra de Campos; Fernando Gutiérrez, whose royal tenancy in Lemos was overshadowed by his possession of the rich *pertiguería* of Santiago, which was in the gift of the archbishop of Compostela rather than of the king;⁴⁶ and the Galician magnate Rodrigo Gómez de Traba, who held Montenegro and Trastámara. Not coincidentally, these three nobles were also the most regular attendants at court, superseded only by Infante Pedro and Martim Sanches themselves and by their proxies in the offices of majordomo and *alférez*.⁴⁷

In other words, by the mid-1220s, most of the major Leonese tenancies were not in Leonese hands, and the size of Alfonso IX's court had been dramatically reduced. Although a trend toward a shrinking court is visible earlier, it is unmistakable in this period; it becomes increasingly rare to see anyone in attendance on Alfonso IX except for the Portuguese infantes and their proxies, Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna, Fernando Gutiérrez, and Rodrigo Gómez de Traba. Support for Alfonso IX among the Leonese nobles had dropped as precipitately as their share of royal tenancies. The change is most marked after Alfonso IX's plan to wed Sancha to Jean of Brienne failed in 1224, suggesting that León's magnates had balked at supporting the claims of two infantas who now seemed unlikely ever to marry. Their king increasingly relied on his Portuguese allies to do what his own nobles would not: back Sancha and Dulce for the throne of León against the claims of Fernando III.

With the extensive properties that Alfonso IX had put at their disposal, the infantas' noble partisans had a fair chance at success; the faction that had

brought Berenguela and Fernando III to power in Castile had not been much larger and had commanded far less of the kingdom's resources. But the Castilian monarchs' victory had also depended on ecclesiastical and conciliar support. Sancha and Dulce needed a consensus that extended beyond the nobility, and Alfonso IX tried to build one. His attentions to the Church in Galicia are particularly obvious; in 1227 and 1228, several of Galicia's foremost cathedrals and monasteries received royal confirmations of a slew of previously granted privileges, often accompanied by new privileges and donations. It was in the course of making these grants, and while the king himself was in Galicia, that Sancha and Dulce again began to co-issue his diplomas.⁴⁸ Evidently Alfonso IX considered his daughters to be in a position of strength, or wanted them to appear that way.

Near the end of his life, Alfonso IX did try to reach out to the Leonese nobles he had alienated. A few of them—notably Diego and Ramiro Froilaz, sons of the powerful Asturian magnate Fruela Ramírez—had rejoined his court by 1230.⁴⁹ This was partly a measure of the king's need; one of his foreign allies, Martim Sanches, disappears from León in 1227, for reasons that are not clear.⁵⁰ The infantas needed new support. But Alfonso IX refused to redistribute Martim Sanches's wealth of tenancies; he retained most of them for the crown, perhaps in hopes that they would bolster Sancha and Dulce's personal resources, and awarded lesser prizes to the Leonese nobles who reconciled with him.

This was how matters stood when Alfonso IX died in the Galician town of Villanueva on September 24, 1230.⁵¹ The news sped at once to Sancha and Dulce; to Fernando III, as he abandoned a failed siege at Jaén; and to Berenguela, who was in Castile awaiting her son's return.⁵² The contest for the Leonese succession had begun.

Alfonso IX had been preparing for this moment for over ten years. He had confronted a long series of challenges to his daughters' prospective succession and had dealt with them as best he could. He had courted foreign magnates whose kinship to Sancha and Dulce made them likely partisans, even at the expense of his own nobles' allegiance. And he had concentrated tenancies in the hands of his supporters, with an eye to the strategic value of those tenancies. Martim Sanches had become the preeminent magnate in Galicia, a region that was home to most of Sancha and Dulce's own properties. Infante Pedro had received the principal tenancies of the eastern Leonese frontier, from Asturias to Extremadura and Salamanca, as a shield against incursions from Castile. And to one of his few native supporters, Rodrigo

Fernández de Valduerna, Alfonso IX had given the major royal holdings within the Leonese Tierra de Campos. When Fernando III entered León to claim his crown, he was almost certain to come through the Tierra de Campos, where his mother's vassals and supporters could smooth his path. Alfonso IX therefore set up a powerful partisan for Sancha and Dulce in the same region, and placed as many key towns as possible in that man's hands.

Yet when the moment of crisis came, all of these carefully constructed strategies collapsed. Martim Sanches was already gone from the Leonese court. Infante Pedro may have absconded too. By 1229 he had married Aurembiaix, countess of Urgell—a marriage that gave him even greater prospects in eastern Iberia than he had previously enjoyed in León.⁵³ Although Pedro's name is on the last confirmed diploma that Alfonso IX is known to have issued, he is not mentioned in any of the chronicles that describe the succession contest.⁵⁴ This is a strange omission, since he should have been the infantas' principal supporter. He may have chosen to decline the role that Alfonso IX had so assiduously groomed him to play; even if he did throw his weight behind his nieces, however, it did them very little good. Some of his most valuable tenancies were quick to declare for Fernando III. And Pedro's failure to assist his nieces, together with Martim Sanches's absence, left Sancha and Dulce's success largely in the hands of the Leonese nobility—the very group that Alfonso IX had tried to circumvent by bringing in the Portuguese.

“Even the Saints Were Fighting”

Sancha and Dulce had the early advantage. They were close to Villanueva when Alfonso IX died;⁵⁵ therefore they received the news of his death long before it could reach either Berenguela or, certainly, Fernando, who was on the road home from Jaén. They wasted no time. Galicia was where Sancha and Dulce were most secure; their personal properties were largely located there, and nobles there and in Asturias were already taking up arms to resist Fernando III. So the infantas left their home ground behind them and headed east into the Leonese heartland,⁵⁶ where their own authority was weaker and where Fernando III's invasion would begin.

Their first stop was the city of Astorga, one of the tenancies Alfonso IX had entrusted to Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna.⁵⁷ But, says the CLRC, on reaching the city, the infantas “were not received as they wished.” Incensed, they left Astorga behind and approached the realm's chief city, León, which

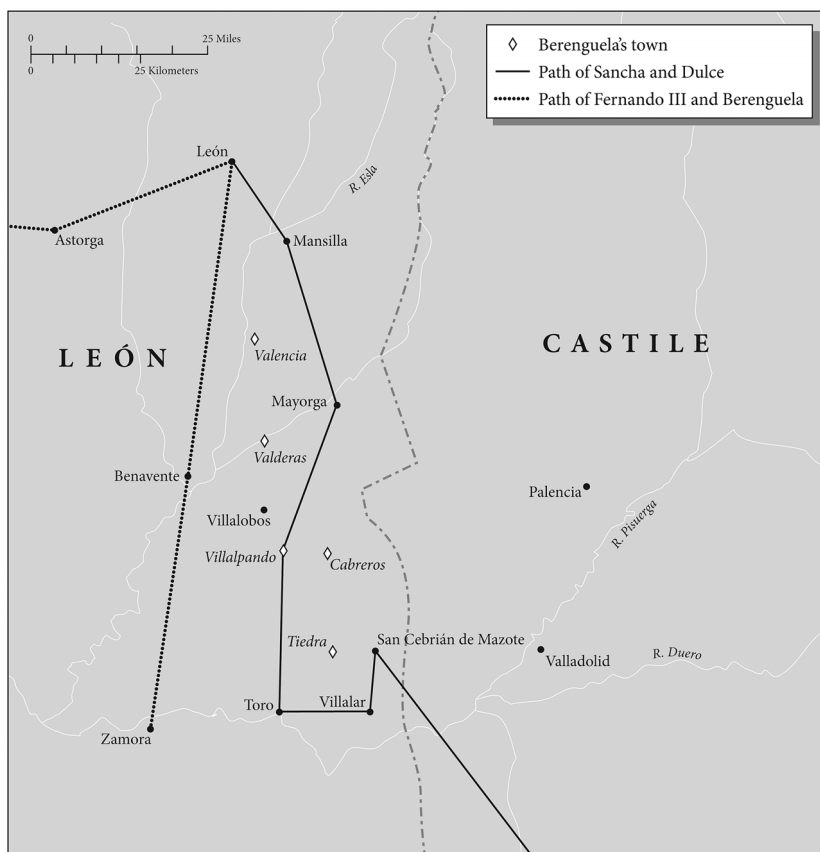


Figure 8. The Castilian advance into León, 1230.

had been in the hands of Infante Pedro for at least seven years.⁵⁸ Yet here again, “they also were not received as they wished.” Now, however, Juan of Osma elaborates a little: “For the response of the people and of the bishops was that they would receive and willingly serve the infantas themselves, but they would not receive their knights or armed men.”⁵⁹

This was a serious blow to the infantas’ hopes. The fact that Infante Pedro held León, or that Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna held Astorga, guaranteed nothing. The CLRC’s claim that the infantas were denied admission to León and Astorga by “the people and the bishops” suggests that although Alfonso IX had spent a great deal of effort to create noble consensus in support of his daughters, he had not done the same with his kingdom’s two other significant powers—the Church and the town councils. And faced with the joint resistance of the prelates and councils, the king’s noble tenants could not enforce their will.⁶⁰

But where had this resistance come from? In Galicia, after all, Alfonso IX *had* courted the Church’s support—with considerable success, as we will see. As for the towns, the generally poor survival rate of municipal privileges makes it difficult to say whether the king tried to win them over qua towns, rather than as the property of their royally appointed tenants. But in many cases, they too chose to back the infantas. And here, again, the heart of the infantas’ support lay in Galicia. It is easy enough to say that the councils and the bishops of eastern León rejected Sancha and Dulce’s claims because they were women—easy, and partly true. But the infantas’ strength elsewhere in the kingdom shows that other forces were at work too.

Astorga and León had both been Berenguela’s cities. She had received Astorga as part of her arras in 1199, and her right to *portazgo* there had been recognized in the Treaty of Cabrerros. She had also held León’s towers during her marriage to Alfonso IX.⁶¹ Her authority in the city of León had ended with the marriage, of course, and Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna’s tenancy in Astorga makes clear that Alfonso IX had fully reclaimed that city too. But it is striking that Sancha and Dulce met such prompt obstruction in Astorga and León, and that it apparently came not from the noble tenants (who were certainly not Berenguela’s partisans), but from the prelates and town councils, who may have had personal ties to Berenguela during her reign as queen of León.

Yet the royal chroniclers are what they are, and their vision of Fernando III’s swift and universal triumph in León has often been accepted at face

value simply because there is no counternarrative. Astorga's and León's unwillingness to receive Sancha and Dulce was certainly discouraging, but Berenguela and Fernando III had met an equally (if not more) reluctant welcome at Coca in 1217, and had gained the Castilian throne nonetheless. The Leonese cities had not declared for Fernando III; not even the court chroniclers claim that they had. At best, they had declared their neutrality. Admitting Sancha and Dulce and their retinue was tantamount to backing the *infantas'* claims; refusing to admit them, or merely refusing to admit their armed men, was simply a way to stall for time, to see how the wind was blowing before the cities committed themselves. As it turned out, many of the Leonese magnates used the same tactic.

Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada insists that the Leonese bishops, at least, supported Fernando III without hesitation:

However, the prelates of the kingdom . . . received King Fernando as their king as soon as they learned of his arrival. These were Juan of Oviedo, Nuño of Astorga, Rodrigo of León, Miguel of Lugo, Martín of Salamanca, Martín of Mondoñedo, Miguel of Ciudad Rodrigo, and Sancho of Coria. When the father had died, they all submitted themselves to the son along with their cities, and the planned revolt [by Sancha and Dulce] could not prevail.⁶²

However, although Archbishop Rodrigo implies that *all* "the prelates of the kingdom" endorsed Fernando III, his actual list of bishops is almost entirely limited to those of southern and eastern León—of Asturias, the Tierra de Campos, and Leonese Extremadura—and includes only two of the five prelates of Galicia, where Sancha and Dulce were strongest.⁶³

Faced with the city of León's refusal to admit their armed retinue, Sancha and Dulce sought refuge elsewhere. And, having been turned away at the episcopal cities of León and Astorga, they now approached a town that had no bishop. This was Benavente, close to Portugal on the western edge of the Tierra de Campos, and another tenancy of Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna. But they received another cold welcome there. Was Benavente's ambivalence also due to its history with Berenguela? She had bestowed its tenancy on two of her clients (including Fernando García de Villamayor) during her reign in León; then, after their separation, Alfonso IX had awarded Benavente's rents to her in the Treaty of Cabreros.⁶⁴ Whatever rights Berenguela had had in

Benavente were long since defunct; when Alfonso IX awarded property to Sancha and Dulce in 1217, he had granted Benavente to their mother, Teresa. But only a few months later, Honorius III had to give express papal protection to Teresa's right to collect Benavente's rents, suggesting that her authority there was not universally accepted.⁶⁵ Powerful figures within Benavente may have remained attached to Berenguela, even though the town's rents belonged to Teresa and Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna had been its tenant since 1205.

By the time that Sancha and Dulce were turned away at Benavente, they—and the townspeople themselves—must have been aware of Fernando III's advance from Castile. The infantas withdrew to a city where they were sure of being received: Zamora, even closer to the Portuguese border, whose bishop is not among those listed by Archbishop Rodrigo and where Berenguela had never had direct influence. Their mother, Teresa, was with them at least on this final leg of their journey, although the CLRC says that she "always accompanied them."⁶⁶

The infantas did find shelter in Zamora; but they were in Leonese Extremadura now. Their disappointments at Astorga, León, and Benavente had forced them essentially to abandon the Tierra de Campos to their Castilian rivals. This was probably a tactical necessity, but it cleared the way for Fernando III to enter León by the quickest and safest route.

For his part, Fernando III was aware of the need for haste. He hurried from the south to rejoin Berenguela, who met him at Orgaz, filled "with maternal anxiety" that he should set out for his father's kingdom without delay.⁶⁷ They returned together to Toledo, where Fernando III "[took] counsel with his mother, the archbishop, and the magnates who were there at the time."⁶⁸ Archbishop Rodrigo conveniently lists the magnates who were there, having returned from the Jaén campaign with the king's army. They included Lope Díaz de Haro, Álvaro Pérez de Castro, Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón, García Fernández de Villamayor, and Alfonso Téllez de Meneses.⁶⁹ The Haro, Girón, and Meneses had helped bring Berenguela and Fernando III to the Castilian throne in 1217. The monarchs could only hope that these allies would help them to the crown of León as well. Yet Fernando III was at least confident that—as Archbishop Rodrigo has Berenguela remind him—the bishops, magnates, and councils of León had twice sworn their allegiance to him as Alfonso IX's heir at the king's command.⁷⁰ In his view, León was his by right—if he could take it.

The Castilians began their advance by approaching smaller frontier strongholds, Villalar and San Cebrián de Mazote, which received Fernando III “as their lord.”⁷¹ Although very little is known about who had controlled Villalar and San Cebrián de Mazote during the 1220s, they had been among the strongholds that Berenguela and Fernando III had assured to Alfonso IX in their peace treaty of November 1217.⁷² Their promise that Alfonso IX’s possession of these fortresses would not be challenged suggests that the Castilian monarchs had previously claimed lordship there. Villalar and San Cebrián were just south of the heart of Berenguela’s demesne in the Tierra de Campos; both are near Tiedra, which Berenguela had held in Fernando III’s name since the Treaty of Cabreros in 1206. As a result, Berenguela probably had partisans or interests in these places, and was relatively sure of a welcome.

While Fernando III was in Villalar, he received a delegation offering him a much greater prize:

knights from the most noble fortress of Toro came before the king, as their lord. They recognized him as their king and the natural lord of the fortress, and begged him with great insistence to come to Toro the following day. The noble queen was the one who planned all this, with great acuity. The following day we entered Toro, where, after homage had been rendered to him, King Fernando was received as king and lord with the agreement of all.⁷³

Toro was an important town, close to the Portuguese frontier and close to Zamora, where Sancha and Dulce had taken refuge from Fernando III’s forces. It had also been a tenancy of Infante Pedro before Alfonso IX’s death. But as in León, Pedro’s tenancy there was evidently not enough to ensure the town’s loyalty to the infantas. However, Archbishop Rodrigo’s aside that Berenguela had planned the entire Castilian advance suggests that she engineered Fernando’s welcome in Toro, as well as his reception in San Cebrián de Mazote and Villalar. Like Zamora, Toro had never been under Berenguela’s direct authority. But it had been a tenancy of one of her most successful clients, Rodrigo Pérez de Villalobos, during her marriage. Although this connection to Toro is secondhand, Berenguela or her allies evidently did have contact with influential people in Toro in 1230; she could not otherwise have “planned” Toro’s offer of allegiance to Fernando III. Even so, it should be noted that indirect ties of this sort were not always so reliable. Rodrigo Pérez

de Villalobos had also held Zamora while Berenguela was queen of León, along with the tenancy of Leonese Extremadura itself. Yet although Fernando had substantial support among the Extremaduran prelates, Zamora and its bishop declared for the infantas. Similarly, Berenguela's arras possessions in Galicia, and even her own tenancy there as queen of León, gave her no advantages in 1230. Her greatest early strengths in the succession contest lay, as always, in the Tierra de Campos.

The CLRC says that Fernando III came to Toro on October 18, 1230, and that he left three days later for Villalpando, "which Queen doña Berenguela held."⁷⁴ Alfonso IX had given Villalpando to Berenguela in the Treaty of Valladolid (1209), and she had kept it throughout the intervening years.⁷⁵ Now she used it as a staging ground for her son's advance into León. Nor was Villalpando the only town she deployed in this way; Archbishop Rodrigo says that Fernando III's retinue moved on from Toro "via the lady queen's castles."⁷⁶ If Sancha and Dulce had a relatively secure base in Galicia, Berenguela had one in the Tierra de Campos. She would ensure her son's power there before he pushed ahead into the riskier regions of the kingdom.

As Fernando and Berenguela moved through the Tierra de Campos, they learned that trouble awaited them elsewhere in León. Archbishop Rodrigo recalls that "we received knights and envoys who came from other cities, who seemed somewhat irresolute about receiving the king. For the lord king's sisters, Sancha and Dulce . . . were preparing to revolt with their supporters."⁷⁷ Sancha and Dulce's following was evidently not as weak as the royal chronicles suggest, if a number of Leonese towns still considered the contest undecided. The ambivalence of these "other cities" reflects the hesitation that the infantas encountered at Astorga and León. The towns opened relations with Fernando III, but did not yet commit themselves to him. Unfortunately, the only narrative sources available for this period favor the Castilians, and they afford only guesses about the extent of the infantas' support. In any case, Fernando III would have to act quickly now to press what advantage he had.

In this moment, when two very different constellations of rulers were in contention for the Leonese monarchy, some Leonese nobles appear to have sought yet a third option. The *Crónica de la población de Ávila* reports that when Fernando III first entered León, he found some of its people reluctant to accept him as their king—not out of loyalty to Sancha and Dulce (at least in this telling), but because the Leonese noble Álvaro Rodríguez Diablo "was going around saying that they ought to receive don Alfonso de Molina"—Fernando's younger brother—"as their lord."⁷⁸ The royal chronicles make

no reference to this suggestion. (The CLRC does mention that when he met with the ambassadors from Toro and a few other towns, the king had to reject "certain foolish ideas that were proposed to him," without explaining what they were.⁷⁹) Álvaro Rodríguez Diablo was unlikely to favor Fernando III's claim in any case. Within the past decade he had been a co-tenant of León with Gonzalo Núñez de Lara and a proxy tenant for Infante Pedro in the Transierra; even more recently, he had held the Infantazgo, a tenancy that would have overlapped some of Berenguela's old arras properties.⁸⁰ If he, or anyone else, put Alfonso de Molina forward as a candidate for the succession, it reveals León's badly torn loyalties. Those who preferred a male candidate for the throne over two female ones might be stymied by the prospect of enthroning Fernando III, thus forcing the union of León and Castile. But Alfonso de Molina had almost as much birthright to León as his older brother, and his accession posed virtually no danger of uniting the two kingdoms; Fernando III now had a small army of sons who stood between their uncle and the throne of Castile. To some in León, then, Fernando III's advantage of gender was trumped by the threat of seeing their kingdom absorbed by Castile. Rejecting the infantas as unmarried women, and refusing Fernando out of fear of union with Castile, some Leonese may have tried to construct a third potential monarchy for themselves.

If there was a push to crown Alfonso de Molina, though, it never went far. The *Crónica de la población de Ávila* reassures its reader that Alfonso himself knew about the plot, and threw his weight behind his brother anyway.⁸¹ From Villalpando, the Castilians left the safety of Berenguela's frontier holdings and struck out for the second-greatest city of the Leonese Tierra de Campos—Mayorga, another of Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna's tenancies.

In contrast with Sancha and Dulce's reception at Rodrigo Fernández's tenancies of Astorga and Benavente, Mayorga received Fernando III at once. Shortly afterward, the same thing happened at Mansilla, which lay between Mayorga and León, even though it had been in the hands of the same magnate. Berenguela had old ties to these towns too; she had received Mansilla and Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga in her arras in 1199. She had also been able to influence the selection of royal tenants for Mayorga proper.⁸² With Mayorga and Mansilla now in Fernando's camp, and Astorga and Benavente having declined to commit themselves one way or the other, Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna stood to lose nearly all of his tenancies. Berenguela's need to break his hold on the Tierra de Campos is obvious, and Sancha and Dulce were doubtless aware of it too; this was why they had made Rodrigo

Fernández's tenancies the front line of the succession contest, even before Fernando III entered León. The infantas' failure to secure significant support there after their father's death only underscores Berenguela's own dominance in the region.

From Mansilla, Fernando III's next logical destination was the city of León itself. Even though Sancha and Dulce had failed to gain the backing of León's bishop and council, the succession contest there was far from decided. The infantas' supporters had seized part of the city's defenses, as Lucas of Tuy (a canon of San Isidoro de León) explains:

For indeed the most noble knight Diego [Froilaz, the Asturian magnate], who was in León, had his men secretly climb up by way of the royal palace, and occupied the tower and church of blessed Isidoro. But when the reverend father Rodrigo, bishop of León, a noble, provident, and honest man, saw this, he garrisoned the church of the see of León with weapons and men and the things necessary for war, so that the city might be preserved for King Fernando. The citizens likewise garrisoned the towers of the walls and of the churches as best they could. There was then in that city, by day and by night, a continual noise of battle and great tribulation and anguish. But the mercy of God did not fail. The aforesaid Diego was stricken by a terrible illness, so that he, or someone through him (I don't know who), cried out that the blessed Isidoro, in order to help King Fernando, wanted to kill that knight [Diego Froilaz] because he had occupied his tower and church. What is more, that knight's eyes seemed to be dragged out of his head and to leave their sockets, not without great pain. Because of this—since he found himself so very gravely tormented—he was forced to restore the tower and church to the abbot and convent of that monastery [San Isidoro], on the advice of Countess Sancha, his noble mother. And he repaid the damages he had done to them, swearing on God's holy gospels that thenceforth he would be a knight and vassal of blessed Isidoro the confessor. And he was immediately restored to health and left the city at once with his men. And Bishop Rodrigo and the citizens, rejoicing in the Lord because even the saints were fighting on King Fernando's behalf, sent him messengers, saying to come at once and receive his city. So King Fernando came . . . together with

the most wise [*prudētissima*] doña Berenguela, his mother, and entered the city of León and, with great glory, obtained the kingdom of his forefathers.⁸³

The miracle story aside, Lucas vividly depicts a power struggle within the city of León—Diego Froilaz, a nobleman and partisan of the infantas, against the bishop and “citizens” (*ciues*) of León. When Diego Froilaz’s illness (and his mother) convinced him to abandon his defense of the city, Bishop Rodrigo and the townspeople, “who had suffered many injuries on his account,”⁸⁴ invited the Castilian king in at once:

The following day we entered León, which enjoys the dignity of the royal seat in that kingdom, and there he [Fernando III] was raised to the throne of the kingdom of León by the bishop and all the citizens, while the clergy and the people sang *Te Deum laudamus* joyfully together; and from then on he was called king of both Castile and León.⁸⁵

Although Archbishop Rodrigo seems to share Lucas of Tuy’s opinion that success in León meant succession in the whole kingdom, the real situation was murkier. For one thing, Fernando III did not fully control the city of León. Its fortifications were still held by García Rodríguez Carnota, Alfonso IX’s longtime merino mayor.⁸⁶ And although Fernando III was in command of eastern León, Sancha and Dulce had supporters and strongholds throughout the west—especially in Galicia, where Fernando III had not yet endeavored to go.⁸⁷ Moreover, acclamation by the bishop and citizens of this city was not the same thing as acclamation by a *curia plena* of prelates, nobles, and town representatives; it was not even a consensus on the scale of the Assembly of Valladolid, which had at least been attended by delegates from several towns. But the royal chroniclers omit these details. Archbishop Rodrigo’s assertion that Fernando III had widespread support among the bishops, and his emphasis on the homage and acclamation of townspeople (of Toro and León, e.g.), are meant to suggest that the kingdom readily accepted Fernando III as its ruler. Even if his assessment of the towns’ enthusiasm is accurate—and we have seen that not all towns were as eager to welcome the Castilians as Toro—Archbishop Rodrigo’s focus on towns and bishops is rhetorical sleight of hand. It seeks to draw attention away from the fact that

Fernando had very little support among another critical group: the Leonese magnates.

After his acclamation at León, Fernando certainly began to act as though he were the recognized king. He began issuing diplomas as “king of Castile and León” by early November (the lapse of more than a month between Alfonso IX’s death and these first diplomas again points to a more difficult accession than the chronicles will admit). And from the beginning, it was clear that the plural monarchy established in Castile would be carried over into León. Just like his Castilian diplomas of the same period, Fernando III’s first extant diploma from León was co-issued with Beatriz, his sons, and Berenguela. It was, not surprisingly, a privilege to the canons of San Isidoro de León.⁸⁸

However, neither this diploma nor the others issued that month were confirmed by any Leonese magnates. Whether because they were absent or, perhaps, out of delicacy, no Castilian nobles confirmed either, except for the Castilian majordomo and *alférez*, Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón and Lope Díaz de Haro. The absence of noble confirmers shows that the Leonese magnates did not flock to Fernando’s side once he entered the kingdom. This was as true of the nobles who had been out of favor with Alfonso IX for the past five or ten years as it was of the late king’s few die-hard loyalists. If Sancha and Dulce’s gender had been the dominant concern of Alfonso IX’s disaffected nobles, then they might be expected to rush to support a viable male claimant to the throne—particularly since Fernando III had solidified his claim by occupying the city of León. The fact that they declined to commit themselves for an entire month after his establishment there indicates that other factors were at work.⁸⁹

The CLRC says that Fernando III insisted on staying in León until he could gain control of the city’s towers.⁹⁰ He and García Rodríguez Carnota somehow reached an understanding; although no documents name a merino mayor for León in the unsettled closing months of 1230, García Rodríguez Carnota reappears in his old post from the beginning of January 1231.⁹¹ Matters with Sancha and Dulce also required negotiation, but the *infantas* apparently saw their chances fading. They and their mother, Queen Teresa, came to the town of Villalobos in the Tierra de Campos. From there Teresa sent envoys to Berenguela, asking the Castilian queen to meet with her and her daughters in Berenguela’s own town of Valencia.⁹²

The choice of venue was itself an admission of defeat; Teresa was placing herself and the *infantas* not in neutral territory, but squarely within her rival’s

dominions. Nevertheless, her envoys met a mixed reception at Fernando's court:

Envoys came there on behalf of Queen Teresa, to discuss the possibility of coming to an agreement. And although their words displeased the magnates, nevertheless the noble queen [Berenguela] so greatly feared the ravaging of the kingdom and the poor that she arranged for the king to stay in León while she went to Valencia to negotiate an agreement with Queen Teresa. When the two queens had met in Valencia, the great acuity of the noble Queen Berenguela arranged things so that the king's sisters returned everything that they held to the king and were satisfied with the provisions that the king and the noble queen assigned to them. And if they had ever had any right to the kingdom, they renounced it absolutely. Once this agreement had been confirmed, the king came, and thereupon we all went to Benavente, to which place the infantas, daughters of Queen Teresa, also came.⁹³

One might well wonder exactly why the Castilian magnates were "displeased," but Berenguela overruled them. At Benavente the monarchs sealed a treaty that established peace "between don Fernando, king of Castile and Toledo, of León and Galicia, and the infantas his sisters, doña Sancha and doña Dulce." Already the document leaves no doubt of the victor in this contest. Fernando III assured his half-sisters an income of 30,000 maravedís a year, to be drawn from specified towns and rents, mainly in Asturias; nonetheless, he retained the regalian rights of justice, coinage, and military service in the towns his sisters controlled.⁹⁴ If either sister died or married, her share of the property would revert to the crown. In return,

the infantas must cause all castles and munitions that are held by knights or other men through their porters or through homage to them to be surrendered to the lord king, and must resign their rights to the kingdom of León, if they had any or claimed to have any, and renounce all privileges or charters made for them by the illustrious king A[lfonso] their father, of blessed memory, concerning the donation or concession of the kingdom, and they must absolve all men, both knights and others, from the homage that they have rendered to them.⁹⁵

Twelve castles were to be given to tenants who did homage to both Fernando III and the infantas, as guarantees that both parties would keep their agreement.⁹⁶ Furthermore, Fernando III promised to protect and defend his sisters and their property, and requested the same protection from the pope.

Evidently, Sancha and Dulce had marshaled at least some of the essential signifiers of monarchy. Besides the “privileges or charters . . . concerning the donation or concession of the kingdom”—a tantalizing hint of lost documents in which Alfonso IX dealt explicitly with his succession—the infantas appear to have received homage from various “men, both knights and others.” As we have seen, a render of homage was one of the monarch-making rituals in Castile and León. Again, it seems that Sancha and Dulce’s bid for the crown was stronger than has generally been supposed, despite their gender.

Although Berenguela is conspicuously absent from most of the agreement that she brokered, it was to her authority, as well as to that of Fernando and the infantas, that the Treaty of Benavente appealed in the end: “And so that the present act may have the firmness of greater approval, we cause the seals of the subscribers—that is, mine and that of Queen doña Berenguela my mother, and those of the infantas my sisters—to be affixed to the present page.”⁹⁷ Her agency here contrasts notably with the lack of direct participation by Queen Beatriz and even by Fernando III’s children. In the course of the treaty, Fernando III swears on the Gospels that he will observe all the terms of the pact, and will cause Beatriz and their children to do the same. “And Queen doña Beatriz will give the infantas her patent charter of this concession and ratification.”⁹⁸ It is, first of all, noteworthy that the treaty required a second diploma, issued independently by Beatriz (yet another female player in this contest of women), to ensure its fulfillment; apparently, the queen-consort had more formal authority than the surviving documentation attests. But Beatriz’s separate ratification also shows that she did not accompany Fernando III to Benavente, despite the importance of the negotiations there.⁹⁹ Perhaps because of their different statuses as “queen of Castile,” Berenguela’s presence was considered necessary to the resolution of the succession crisis, while Beatriz’s was not.

The Treaty of Benavente did more than remove the still-considerable threat posed by Sancha and Dulce’s claim to the Leonese throne. Several of the castles that it listed as guarantors of the peace had been given to Sancha and Dulce by their father in 1217, when the succession contest had begun.¹⁰⁰ Berenguela and Fernando III removed these important strongholds from the

infantas' direct control and placed them in the hands of castellans who were loyal to both the infantas and the crown. The maneuver brought the castles back under royal authority, and thus consolidated Fernando and Berenguela's power in Galicia and along the Portuguese border. In exchange, the monarchs granted the infantas properties and rents in Asturias, farther from potential supporters in Portugal.¹⁰¹ These were important steps in extending Fernando III's authority as king of León into the western part of the kingdom.

In addition to its legal functions, the agreement at Benavente had a performative purpose. According to the CLRC, it was issued and sealed "in the presence . . . of the two aforesaid queens [Berenguela and Teresa], the king, his sisters, the archbishops of Toledo and Compostela, many barons, and the councils."¹⁰² Such an assembly ranks as a *curia plena*, if not actually a Cortes.¹⁰³ Here, in other words, was a vehicle for the formal consensus that Fernando III had so far lacked. The chronicles argue that his acclamation at the city of León was enough to make him king, but as we have seen, this was an optimistic interpretation. The Castilians needed the Church, the nobles, and the town councils to witness Sancha and Dulce's renunciation of power, and to attest—publicly—to Fernando III's legitimacy as the inheriting king.¹⁰⁴ Benavente was chosen as a venue to remind observers of the *curia plena* held there in 1202, when Alfonso IX had first bidden his kingdom to recognize Fernando as his heir.

Benavente was a resounding victory for Fernando III, and the result of savvy and ruthless planning on the part of Berenguela. The negotiations here and at Valencia were not, as historians have sometimes fantasized, a case of two modest and pious queens (one of them a future saint) reaching a mutually pleasing, domestically minded agreement that would save León from the devastation of war.¹⁰⁵ They were the last throes of a rivalry that had stretched across decades, and that was no less fiercely fought because its protagonists were women. The entire kingdom of León had been at stake, and Berenguela's partisans applauded the long labor and great skill that had given the queen her victory:

And in this shone beyond all description the skillful governance of the noble queen, who gave this kingdom to her son as surely as she had given him the kingdom of Castile, which belonged to her by hereditary right. For she knew how to organize everything in such a

way that, although the union of the kingdoms pleased hardly anyone, she labored to arrange things so that the union of the kingdoms was achieved without bloodshed, and both kingdoms enjoyed eternal peace.¹⁰⁶

Berenguela's role in securing León for her son complicates the problem of gender in this succession contest. Unquestionably, the fact that Sancha and Dulce were women was a reason for the ambivalence of León's nobles, towns, and bishops; queens were unwelcome as sole sovereigns in medieval Iberia. But it was not the only reason. The infantas did, after all, have significant support in western León, especially in Galicia and close to the Portuguese border, where their personal domains lay. Many months would pass before those regions came fully under Fernando III's control, even after Sancha and Dulce renounced their claims in the Treaty of Benavente. The very fact that Fernando III did not receive a wholehearted, kingdom-wide endorsement from the outset shows that the Leonese were not simply looking for a male ruler in place of a female one.

Indeed, the Leonese nobility only began to confirm Fernando III's diplomas after the infantas had conceded defeat. The Treaty of Benavente was sealed on December 11, 1230; on the nineteenth, Fernando III issued a diploma that includes the Leonese nobles' confirmations for the first time.¹⁰⁷ His confirmers were far more numerous than Alfonso IX's had been in recent years, and among them were erstwhile foes like Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna and Diego Froilaz (although the Galician Rodrigo Gómez de Traba remained aloof at first). Clearly the Castilians had put effort into making themselves pleasant to the Leonese magnates, both those who had been alienated from court and those who had ardently supported Sancha and Dulce.¹⁰⁸ And once the infantas had retired from the field, most nobles tried to make the best of things with this new monarchy.

Fernando III had had an invaluable strategic advantage in Berenguela's long history of lordship in the Tierra de Campos. It allowed him to enter Leonese territory unopposed and to advance even as far as Toro and the city of León. So far from winning support based on his masculinity, then, Fernando III relied on his mother's authority and patronage to gain territory and supporters in the Tierra de Campos. The chronicles leave no doubt about this. Fernando III traveled via castles that Berenguela commanded, and was welcomed in places like Toro through her diplomacy and power. The

ready response to Berenguela's authority in the Leonese Tierra de Campos demonstrates that this was more than a contest of male versus female rule.

The Castilian chroniclers themselves never say that the Leonese rejected Sancha and Dulce because they were women. They do not even indulge in the muted misogyny that Archbishop Rodrigo and Juan of Osma use to explain Berenguela's elevation of Fernando at the Assembly of Valladolid. The discourse of gender that modern scholars have often imposed on the succession contest masks a far more sophisticated reality. Sancha and Dulce's bid for the throne was not undone by their womanhood. Rather, it was undone by *another woman*: Berenguela. The maneuvers of a powerful king, his male allies, and the infrequently seen but undoubtedly influential Queen Teresa on the infantas' behalf were ultimately frustrated—and the strategic mind that frustrated them belonged to the Castilian queen. From her successful efforts to prevent the infantas' marriages to her negotiation with Teresa at Benavente, she was the person who did the most to defeat Sancha and Dulce. Was this, perhaps, why the Castilian chroniclers shied away from claiming that the infantas' gender made them unsuitable monarchs? After all, the monarchy that established itself in their place relied heavily on a female sovereign. And she meant to be as active in the plural monarchy of León as she had always been in Castile.

We might, with reason, see Berenguela's attack on Sancha and Dulce as a classic case of a woman reinforcing misogynist social conventions, in order to gain power at other women's expense.¹⁰⁹ But it was not only that. Certainly, Berenguela had long since learned to manage whatever cultural handicaps were imposed by her gender and to succeed in a world dominated by men. Yet she had also discovered that lordship could count for more than gender. She could assemble and command male allies; so could the infantas. She could seek and build consensus for the legitimacy of her son's rule; Sancha and Dulce, it seems, did the same for their own. Her opponents were not powerless; their bid for the crown was not quixotic. As Berenguela's later career demonstrates, the Leonese were as amenable as Castilians to including a reigning queen in their plural monarchy.

Chapter 7

Queen of Castile and León, 1230–1246

The crown's chroniclers agreed that Berenguela, as much as or more than her son, had brought about Fernando III's elevation to the throne of León and the union of the long-sundered western kingdoms. To see Fernando crowned in León had been perhaps Berenguela's most cherished ambition; it had certainly been the one for which she fought the longest. While their accession in Castile had been a dynastic accident, Berenguela had sought to establish Fernando as León's heir ever since he was born. Finally she had succeeded, even despite the wishes of Alfonso IX.

Yet her very success called her role into question. In Castile, Berenguela was an inheriting queen; Fernando III's birthright and power originated in and were shared with her. In León, she had no such rights. She had been the queen of León once, both during her marriage and for a long time thereafter. But Innocent III had invalidated the marriage that had given her that title. And although Fernando III's legitimacy had been restored by Innocent's successor, his parents' union had received no such rehabilitation. Berenguela herself had given up the title of queen of León once she could replace it with that of queen of Castile. She had no grounds to reclaim it now, and therefore no grounds on which to establish in León the independent royal authority that she held in Castile.

This was a perilous moment for Castile's plural monarchy. If Berenguela held no authority in León, then the balance of royal power that had prevailed in Castile would become almost impossible to maintain. But to transfer the plural monarchy intact from Castile to León required Fernando III to cede some authority in León to his mother, who had no real right to it.

Yet Fernando III did exactly that. Even his earliest diplomas as king of León were issued by Berenguela's "agreement and approval," *assensus et*

beneplacitum, just as his Castilian diplomas had always been. This was true even of diplomas that dealt exclusively with Leonese institutions and concerns.¹ Berenguela's authority to "agree and approve" such acts showed that her status as a reigning monarch in Castile now extended into León as well.

To some extent, the formal delineation of her role remained vague. In her independent letters and diplomas, Berenguela continued to title herself only as queen of Castile and Toledo.² Other royal and nonroyal documents simply called her the queen, without bothering to specify what she was queen of; this is the case with most of Fernando III's diplomas, for example, although they had observed the same formula before 1230. Nevertheless, individual charters quickly recognized her as reigning *with* her son, much as they recognized his wife, Beatriz. In 1232, for example, García Muñoz de Villavega and his nephew don Muño gave property to the monastery of San Andrés de Arroyo, dating their gift "In the reign of King don Fernando with Queen doña Berenguela his mother, and with Queen doña Beatriz his wife in Castile and in Toledo, and in León and in Galicia."³ And, both at home and abroad, Berenguela was often explicitly or implicitly recognized as queen of both Castile and León. Her own chronicler, Lucas of Tuy, titled her "Queen of the Spains," *Yspaniarum regina*,⁴ which echoed the language of western hegemony used by Alfonso VII, the last ruler of a united León-Castile, and by Fernando II of León in the years when he sought to extend his dominion over Castile.⁵ And in a 1234 letter, King Thibault of Navarre addressed her unequivocally as "queen of Castile and León," *regina Castelle et Legionis*.⁶ There was some ambiguity, then, about Berenguela's formal role in León, but it was a deliberate ambiguity. Berenguela refrained from openly using her married title, perhaps to soothe León's anxieties about Castilian domination—Fernando III was at least the son of the late king, but Berenguela had always been a foreigner, bound to the interests of Castile at least as much as to those of León. Still, her subjects, her court, and her neighbors all recognized that after 1230, she held royal authority in both kingdoms. Castile's plural monarchy had indeed carried over into León, based not on formal claims but on the consent of the monarchs themselves. Once again, Berenguela and Fernando III had made each other king and queen of León—she by enabling his accession there, he by extending some of the crown's authority to her.

Historians have generally accepted Berenguela as the central figure in the union of Castile and León. Her queenship in the unified kingdoms, however, has remained largely unexplored; some scholars have even questioned whether she had much influence by the 1230s.⁷ Yet the surviving documents

of Fernando III's later reign clearly record the force and effects of Berenguela's power both in León and in Castile. My purpose here, as in Chapter 5, is to demonstrate that Berenguela exercised genuine formal authority in the reunified kingdoms, even though Fernando III's authority was not thereby diminished. Far from losing prominence as she aged, Berenguela may actually have grown more powerful; some of her most significant activities date from her twilight years. Moreover, her experience and knowledge made possible some of Fernando III's major accomplishments; the conquest of Córdoba in 1236 is the best-documented example. In the last sixteen years of Berenguela's life, we can observe the fruition of the complex collaboration between her and her son.

Forging a Union in Castile and León

When Fernando III became king of León, he was about twenty-nine, a husband and a father to at least six children. Berenguela was about fifty, an advanced age even for a highborn woman.⁸ Yet she remained both active and influential in her son's affairs, as Archbishop Rodrigo attests:

For this noble queen Berenguela raised her son on good works in such a way that the noble queen—forgetting no virtue, lacking no divine gift—never ceased to pour good lessons into his heart, like honeyed milk suffused with grace. Nor did she ever wean him from her virtue-filled breast. And although he was a grown man and well established in the prime of life, his mother never ceased or ceases to advise him in the vigilant pursuit of what is pleasing to God and men. For she never persuaded him to effeminate works, but always to noble ones.⁹

This passage was written late in the monarchs' reign. Its graphically maternal imagery of Berenguela nursing her son on virtue—with the accompanying implication that Fernando III owes whatever virtue he has to her—suggests Berenguela's dominance. She has always been and still remains Fernando's teacher and advisor in "what is pleasing to God and men," and as such she can take credit for urging him on to his noblest accomplishments—she, unlike other women, has never encouraged "effeminacy."¹⁰ Moreover, despite

the archbishop's reminder that Fernando III is an adult man, the metaphor of the king as an unweaned infant is a considerably more powerful image.

This is the DRH's equivalent to Lucas of Tuy's description of Fernando III as "the humblest schoolboy beneath the rod" of his mother's discipline. The chroniclers' infantilizing of a successful and powerful king is perplexing enough. But the DRH carries it further by describing Berenguela's relationship to her son as specifically maternal, through its imagery of child-rearing, nursing, and weaning. It is the most explicitly feminine depiction of Berenguela in any of the contemporary chronicles; other passages that dwell on her gender tend to concern themselves with gendered spiritual characteristics, such as modesty, piety, and benevolence toward the poor. Here, however, Berenguela's femininity is associated with her body, with physical aspects of womanhood such as birth and lactation. While this passage is part of a general paean to Berenguela, the fact that it was written late in her life—when she was well past the age to birth or nurse any child—makes its emphasis on her physical maternity all the more remarkable.

This passage, and the others like it, are efforts to represent Berenguela's authority in the least threatening terms. During the later Middle Ages, royal women who exercised power as Berenguela did—as ruling sovereigns, military leaders, and regents—were frequently praised as virile. That is, they were said to have risen above the deficiencies of their sex to demonstrate the courage, resolve, and wisdom proper to men.¹¹ Enthusiastic as they are, the Leonese-Castilian chroniclers never employ this trope.¹² Instead, their praise for Berenguela is explicitly linked to her femininity, both spiritual and, in this case, biological. Emphasizing Berenguela's motherhood risked diminishing Fernando III's stature, by positioning him as a child in relation to his adult mother. But it also set Berenguela's authority in a "natural" context. Motherhood was a safe and proper role for women, and one that supposedly compelled them to promote their children's interests at all costs.¹³ To depict Berenguela as a nurturing mother, therefore, was to frame her activities and influence over her son within familiar parameters.¹⁴

To depict Berenguela as a woman blessed with masculine attributes, on the other hand, would have endangered the careful balance of the plural monarchy. Berenguela's success as a ruler depended on neither becoming nor seeming to become a rival to her son, and her chief asset was her womanhood. As long as her power was cloaked in femininity and maternity, then not only was Fernando III's deference to her natural, but she also had no viable chance of challenging his authority. However, if Berenguela's power came to be

viewed in masculine terms, then her dominance over Fernando III would acquire uncomfortable associations—of lordship, regency, even usurpation—and his deference to her would appear as emasculated weakness rather than filial piety. For that reason, Berenguela's chroniclers were content to avoid the conventional discourse of feminine virility, and to focus instead on an equally conventional discourse of maternal solicitude.¹⁵

Resolving the Succession Crisis

By the end of 1230, Sancha and Dulce had acknowledged Fernando III as the sole legitimate heir to their father's throne. Their surrender had come at a high price for Fernando III, however, and even the triumphalistic chroniclers hint that the Treaty of Benavente did not put an end to the crisis. Not everyone in León was willing to follow the infantas' lead in yielding to their new Castilian monarchs. In order to rule effectively, Fernando III had to persuade or force Sancha and Dulce's remaining supporters to accept his lordship.

He began this project just after the treaty was sealed, leaving Benavente for the Portuguese border and Leonese Extremadura. The court circulated in that area for three months, allowing Fernando III to consolidate his power there by claiming in person the recognition owed to a king.¹⁶ At the end of March 1231, with the Leonese side of the border secured, he crossed into Portugal and met with Sancho II at Sabugal. Sancho II was Sancha and Dulce's first cousin,¹⁷ and the infantas had had enough support in Portugal during the 1220s that Fernando III needed to forestall any future conflicts on his western flank. A diploma issued a few weeks later at Zamora records some of the horse-trading that had taken place among the monarchs.

According to the king's diploma, at Sabugal "I promised" (*promisi*) to give the castle of San Esteban de Chaves to Sancho II:

and I and my mother Queen doña Berenguela, and my wife Queen doña Beatriz, agreed [*conuenimus*] to this, that we would give him the aforesaid castle . . . but we could not do this until we freed the said castle from the claim of Queen doña Teresa . . . and we freed the aforesaid castle in this way: I promised that, if the king of Portugal did mischief in the castles or in the possessions that Queen doña Teresa has in Portugal, I would have to defend and assist her and

her castles and her possessions in Portugal, as though they were my castles and my possessions; and I promised to do this in good faith. And if anything fatal [lit., “anything human”] should befall me, my mother Queen doña Berenguela and my wife Queen doña Beatriz, and my son who is reigning in my place, shall be bound to do the same in this matter.¹⁸

The document shifts back and forth between the pronouns *I* and *we*. While Fernando III’s chancery certainly used the royal plural on occasion, the context of this diploma indicates that in this case, *I* refers to the king alone, while *we* refers to all three Castilian monarchs, the king and both queens. *I* is used consistently and logically: “should befall me,” “my mother,” “my wife,” “my son.” *We*, on the other hand, never appears unequivocally as a royal plural; there is no mention of “our wife,” for example. Instead, the first occurrence of the first person plural comes in a verb that clearly includes all three monarchs: “I and my mother Queen doña Berenguela, and my wife Queen doña Beatriz, agreed [*conuenimus*].” That *we* includes the queens is reinforced by the use of *I* to describe the military aspects of the pact with Teresa. Berenguela and Beatriz took no active role in combat abroad, so only Fernando could directly fulfill the pledge to “defend and assist” Teresa and her property. Yet even this division of labor is qualified by the provision that if Fernando III dies, the same obligations are incumbent upon Berenguela and Beatriz, who are expected to rule either jointly with or as regents for the new king.

This use of *I* and *we* indicates the queens’ status in León. Fernando III made the initial promise to turn over San Esteban de Chaves, probably as part of a larger alliance. Berenguela and Beatriz later gave their consent to the deal. Interestingly, the diploma implies that all three monarchs—not only Fernando III—participated in the cession of San Esteban: “*We* would give him the aforesaid castle . . . but *we* could not do this until *we* freed the said castle.” No evidence indicates that San Esteban de Chaves was the personal property of either Berenguela or Beatriz; on the contrary, it appears to have been a royal castle whose control Alfonso IX had given to Teresa either wholly or in part.¹⁹ Both queens, therefore, had recognized rights in crown possessions—and in possessions of the Leonese crown, at that. The statement that “we” freed the castle from Teresa’s claim also suggests that Berenguela and Beatriz were involved in negotiations with Teresa. That Berenguela should negotiate with her old rival is not surprising; they had just hammered out a much more difficult

agreement at Benavente. But the assertion of her and Beatriz's rights over Leonese royal properties leaves little doubt that the two women would hold the same far-reaching and active kind of queenship in León that they did in Castile.

At the same time, the document betrays weaknesses. The Leonese-Castilian monarchs were compelled to barter with, and yield a castle to, the king of Portugal. In order to do so, they had to pledge military assistance to Sancha and Dulce's mother, and defend her possessions *in Portugal* if Sancho II committed infractions there—which bound them to a potential war with Portugal on Teresa's behalf. These were not debilitating concessions, but they were also not the work of monarchs who had the upper hand.

Even after buying peace on the Portuguese border, Fernando III confronted a still more troublesome problem. Sancha and Dulce's strongest support had been in Galicia, and even by late 1231 that region had not resigned itself to Castilian rule. As a result of his trip through Leonese Extremadura, says the CLRC, "our king held his father's kingdom in peace, except for Galicia, where he could not immediately go, and where there was no small disturbance, which had broken out at his father's death and still continued."²⁰

Fernando III's inability to quell the unrest in Galicia at once, or even to approach the region, indicates how fragile his control of the rest of the kingdom still was in 1230 and 1231. Having returned from Extremadura, Fernando III spent most of 1231 close to the Leonese-Castilian border, where he had ready access to both kingdoms, but also where his support—and Berenguela's—was strongest. The court's itinerary during these months, with its protracted stays in Burgos, Valladolid, and León, indicates the usefulness of Berenguela's border territories as the monarchs sought to forge a single unified kingdom out of two bitterly divided ones.

When Fernando III did visit Galicia in December 1231, Berenguela did not accompany him. Her prolonged absence from the intitations of his diplomas in the early months of 1232 is the most marked of her career. Clearly, this was not a time or place when the Castilian monarchy wished to advertise Berenguela's authority. She had few partisans in Galicia; on the contrary, it was a region where Teresa, Sancha, and Dulce had been strong. The pacification of Galicia may have been one of the few moments in Berenguela's career when she was a liability to her son.

Echoes of the succession crisis haunted the Leonese-Castilian monarchs even after Fernando III completed his tour of Galicia. One example is the

contest over the castle of Castrotoraf. Originally a royal property, Castrotoraf had been donated to the Order of Santiago by Fernando II of León—only to be reclaimed for the crown by Fernando II's successor, Alfonso IX.²¹ Decades of royal and papal bickering ensued, and in 1229—when Alfonso IX badly needed allies to support his daughters' claim to inherit—the king tried to settle the question by recognizing the Order's right to Castrotoraf “by hereditary right,” *iure hereditario*. In exchange, he required the Order's promise to use Castrotoraf to “make peace, war, and truces for you and for your daughters, Infantas doña Sancha and doña Dulce”.²² At some point in 1230, the Order made good on that promise; Sancha and Dulce took possession of Castrotoraf and entrenched themselves there so strongly that Fernando III feared he would not be able to dislodge them.

Even during the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Benavente, the infantas refused to yield Castrotoraf. So, as he later explained to the pope, Fernando III persuaded the Order of Santiago to allow Sancha and Dulce to retain the castle for life, promising that he would later return it to the Order and compensate the knights for their loss in the meantime.²³ Probably because this agreement would be unpalatable to the pope, it was omitted from the formal terms of the Treaty of Benavente, which had been sent to Gregory IX for confirmation.²⁴ But the Order later grew dissatisfied with its bargain, and appealed to Gregory IX to have Castrotoraf returned.²⁵

Gregory ordered an investigation. His delegate, Bishop Martín of Zamora, summoned the knights of Santiago to produce evidence that they had opposed the gift of Castrotoraf to Sancha and Dulce, or at least had tried to get the castle back afterwards. He recounted the knights' testimony in a subsequent letter to Gregory IX, along with the supporting testimony of major Castilian and Leonese prelates. Both Bishop Mauricio of Burgos and Bishop Tello of Palencia attested that the Order had done its utmost:

we saw, and we testify to it, the aforesaid master and the chief commander of the Order [of Santiago] and some of their brethren . . . prostrate at the feet of the lord king and of our lady the queen, his mother, asking the king with great earnestness and devout humility [to return Castrotoraf].²⁶

Mauricio added that he had seen this two or three different times. Tello concurred that he had witnessed the master, the chief commander, and other

knights “on their knees at the feet of the lord king and his mother, not once but many times, ask[ing] with great earnestness that the lord king deign to return *Castrotoraf* to them.” Each time, according to both bishops, “the lord king” had taken counsel, and then had refused the Order’s request because of the pact he had made with his sisters, and the harm that might come from breaking it.²⁷

Mauricio and Tello were longstanding allies of Berenguela’s. But they had no reason to exaggerate Berenguela’s role in the dispute in letters to their colleague, or to the pope. And although their accounts agree that the Order’s request was ultimately denied by Fernando III, they also agree that it was posed to both the king and Berenguela. Their image of the Order’s knights prostrate or kneeling before both monarchs further implies that Berenguela and Fernando III heard these pleas while standing or sitting beside each other. If so, then the iconography constructed by the Leonese-Castilian court was one of joint sovereign power. Berenguela shared a physical space with the king, set apart from the rest of the court and possibly further distinguished by a royal dais or thrones.²⁸ Her placement, along with the authority mutely ascribed to her by the imploring knights, demonstrated publicly that she and her son shared the rights and means of intervention in this peculiarly Leonese affair.

It must be noted that Bishop Martín received a third testimonial on the knights’ behalf. This one came from a group of prelates: Archbishop Rodrigo, Bishop Nuño of Astorga, Bishop Bernardo of Segovia, and Bishop Juan of Osma, the royal chancellor. Their account concurs with those of Mauricio and Tello, except that it does not mention Berenguela.²⁹ However, this is not strong enough evidence to discount Mauricio and Tello’s reports of the queen’s involvement, since, again, they had no incentive to exaggerate.

The bishops’ letters convinced Gregory IX that the Order was not at fault. He then addressed himself to Fernando III; but after an initial scolding, the bishops’ pleas (along with Fernando III’s exemplary military service to the faith in *al-Andalus*) tempered Gregory’s wrath. On the condition that *Castrotoraf* return to the Order as soon as it passed out of the *infantas*’ hands, he allowed the pact with Sancha and Dulce to stand.³⁰

The episode of *Castrotoraf* offers a glimpse of Berenguela’s formal role at court, acting jointly with her son, though again not with the same scope of power. That role is illustrated more directly through her participation in royal justice.

“In the Presence of the Queen”

Berenguela's formal judicial capacity in Castile had typically been exercised alongside Fernando III. Her role there is most often visible in charters that document either royal approval of an individual transaction or a royal judgment in a dispute.³¹ In some cases Berenguela sealed such charters; in others, the charter simply attests to her presence when the approval or judgment was made.

However, Berenguela's reign in the unified León-Castile offers many more, and often more explicit, examples of her share in royal justice. As early as May 1231, Fernando III sealed an agreement between the monastery of Oña, in Castile, and Álvaro and Sancha Fernández; it was made “in the presence of Fernando, the illustrious king of Castile and Toledo, León and Galicia; Queen doña Berenguela, his mother, also being there in person.”³² I have argued before that because Berenguela was present when such agreements were concluded, and because the parties involved thought her attendance was worth recording, we can infer that her presence had formal significance. That inference is further supported by an agreement made the previous month between the Order of Santiago and the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela. The agreement was made “in the presence of don F[ernando], the illustrious king of Castile and León, and of his most serene mother, Queen doña Berenguela, with their consent and approval.”³³ The charter includes no other proofs of royal confirmation, such as a royal corroboration in the first person. Instead, the monarchs' sanction was expressed by their personal witness, and underscored by the written formula of “consent and approval”—similar, again, to the formula used for Berenguela's sanction of Fernando III's acts. Even more than the others, this charter's language illustrates that an agreement made in the presence of royalty carried royal approval—and that such approval could come from Berenguela as well as from her son. The queen's involvement in the latter case is particularly instructive because it deals with Leonese affairs. By 1231, Berenguela already commanded enough authority in León to ratify the acts of that kingdom's foremost prelate.

Diplomas that Fernando III issued after his mother's death show that Berenguela played a similar role as a witness to the king's own acts. In two nearly identical diplomas, one issued to the town council of Úbeda and the other to the councils of Castilian Extremadura, Fernando III fulfilled

promises that he had made decades earlier. The councils had asked for certain privileges to be restored, “just as I promised and granted to them . . . in front of my mother and my nobles, and the archbishop, and the bishops, and the knights of Castile and Extremadura, and my entire court.”³⁴ This recitation of luminaries (especially the reference to “my entire court,” *toda mi corte*) suggests that the original grants were made at a *curia plena*—or, given the presence of “knights of Castile and Extremadura,” at an early incarnation of the Cortes.³⁵ The presence of royal, noble, knightly, and episcopal observers lent their authority to the curia’s acts, thus binding the king more firmly to carry them out.³⁶ It is significant, then, that the only royal witness mentioned is Berenguela. A *curia plena* would ordinarily include other members of the royal family—Fernando III’s brother Alfonso, for example, or his wife or sons. But Berenguela’s presence at the original concession evidently carried more formal weight than that of other members of the royal family. In their emphasis on Berenguela’s witness of the original agreement, and on its significance even after her death, these diplomas once again show that Berenguela had a unique status in the kingdom, superior even to that of the king’s wife and sons.

Still, Berenguela’s judicial authority extended beyond the symbolic value of her presence. After 1230 she continued to act jointly with Fernando III in confirming, and even sealing, certain individual agreements. This is particularly notable in the charters of the monastery of Las Huelgas. In 1232, the abbess and convent there requested, and received, the seals and confirmation of both monarchs on a donation: “And so that this exchange shall endure forever, we, the abbess, and the infantas and the convent . . . beg King don Fernando and Queen doña Berenguela, his mother, to grant and confirm this exchange and to put their seals on these charters.”³⁷ Again, in 1244, the bishop of Burgos—a post occupied by the royal chancellor, Berenguela’s protégé Juan of Osma, since Bishop Mauricio’s death in 1238—sold property to Las Huelgas, and requested that the sale be confirmed with the seals of both Berenguela and Fernando III: “And so that this sale may be firm and stable, we, don Juan, by the grace of God bishop of Burgos and the king’s chancellor, and we, the cathedral chapter of Santa María de Burgos, set our seals on this charter, and ask King don Fernando and Queen doña Berenguela, his mother, to order their seals to be set here.” The monarchs did as requested: “And I, don Fernando, by the grace of God king of Castile and of Toledo and of León and of Galicia and of Córdoba and of Murcia, and I, doña Berenguela, by the grace of God queen of Castile and of Toledo, at the

request of don Juan, bishop of Burgos and the king's chancellor, order our seals to be set on this charter."³⁸ Even in 1244, Berenguela had not relinquished the independent sovereign authority implied by use of her personal seal on royal acts. Note, however, that in this diploma—as in any diploma she issued herself—Berenguela claimed only the title of queen of Castile.

These documents show that Berenguela remained active in the affairs of Burgos and of Las Huelgas, and we have already seen that she lent her presence and approval to agreements concluded elsewhere, both in Castile and in León. She also counseled her son when he heard requests or complaints from subjects. During the later 1230s, knights from Segovia and Madrid came to the royal court to resolve a longstanding dispute over land use in Manzanares, which lay between the two towns. The king heard the case, then issued a judgment "with the advice of the queen my mother, and of Archbishop don Rodrigo of Toledo, and of the bishops and nobles and of the other good men who were with me."³⁹ Berenguela, therefore, was informed of cases that came before the king, discussed them with him, and advised him, much as his noble and episcopal courtiers did. However, his vassals' counsel was a formal duty that they owed to their lord. Berenguela's advice, by contrast, came not from obligation but from right. This is made more evident by a similar diploma that Fernando III issued in 1250, after his mother's death. Again, the diploma recorded his judgment of a dispute, this time in León: "And I took my counsel with Infante don Alfonso, my son, and with the archbishop of Santiago, and with the bishops and nobles who were with me."⁴⁰ The Infante Alfonso here is Fernando III's firstborn son and heir, the future Alfonso X. Like Berenguela, he appears first in the list of counselors and without any other members of the royal family. His privileged position comes from his status as heir—but if so, to what does Berenguela owe her corresponding position in the earlier diploma? It was her status as an inheriting queen, endowed with her own sovereign power, that gave her such prominence in the exercise of regalian justice.

Yet, again, her role was not limited to that of an advisor. Another diploma reveals that she also judged cases alongside her son:

a case was argued between the abbot and convent of La Vid, on one hand, and Gómez González and Sancha González, his sister, on the other, in the presence of me, Fernando, by the grace of God king of Castile and Toledo, León, Galicia, and Córdoba, and in the presence of the most serene Queen doña Berenguela, my mother.⁴¹

Berenguela had been present not only to confirm the resolution of this case, but also to hear it contested in the royal court. Her presence beside Fernando III under these circumstances indicates that, like him, she acted as a judge—fully sharing in this peculiarly regalian right.

As often happened, the monarchs did not immediately issue a judgement in this case. Once they had heard the arguments, Fernando III delegated the matter to officers of the court for further investigation. The men assigned to this case were the royal chancellor, Bishop Juan of Osma; the merino mayor of Castile, don Moriel; the king's majordomo, Rodrigo González Girón; and the queen's majordomo, García Fernández de Villamayor, who had just returned to Berenguela's service after a long stint as majordomo to her son.⁴² García Fernández's appointment as a delegate judge indicates that Berenguela, like the king, remained involved in this case after the initial hearing. When the case was finally concluded, Fernando III's confirming diploma was issued together with his family, and with the "agreement and approval" of his mother.⁴³

Such diplomas are strong evidence of Berenguela's formal authority, but at the same time, royal diplomas only reflect the court's view of itself. Berenguela might have been recognized within the court as a sovereign actor; but did her subjects share that view, or did they consider regalian authority to lie solely with the king?

Just as in Castile, many in the unified kingdoms apparently saw Fernando III as their primary, and even only, monarch; in the dating formulas of individual charters, his name frequently appears either alone or coupled with those of family members—his wife, his sons—who do not include Berenguela. Yet there is also considerable evidence that Berenguela was popularly recognized as a reigning queen. Hundreds of extant charters from both Castile and León do include her name in their dating formulas. And an account in the *Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún* indicates that Fernando III and Berenguela were both perceived as authorities in the execution of justice.

The burghers of the town of Sahagún had made a bid to escape the dominion of the monastery of Sahagún, by claiming that their town actually belonged to the crown. Their case came before the royal court:

it was necessary for [the abbot of Sahagún] to go before King don Fernando and before Queen doña Berenguela, his mother, in whose presence his case was heard at great length. . . . But finally, after a few days, through the intervention of divine mercy, the matter was

settled . . . such that the lord king and the queen his mother and the entire court recognized the rights of the monastery of Sahagún. . . . [T]he said king and queen judged that they [the burghers who had brought the case] deserved to be hanged; but Rodrigo González Girón, who favored them, pleaded for them.

Then the lord king and the queen ordered that for the sake of peace, the said burghers, whom the lord king had judged to be traitors and false to their lord—that is, the abbot of Sahagún . . . should give and possess all their property according to the judgement and will of their lord the abbot.⁴⁴

In this passage, nearly every royal act is performed jointly. Both Fernando III and Berenguela hear the case, authorize its settlement, and pass sentence on the defeated burghers. The repeated assertions that both monarchs heard and judged the case renders the passage's final comment, that the king (alone) had judged the burghers to be traitors, odd, but not very significant. The portion of the *Crónicas anónimas* that records this event was written in the fourteenth century, and is of dubious historical accuracy. However, it has considerable value as a record of local historical memory.⁴⁵ Even though royal histories were already downplaying Berenguela's role by the fourteenth century, the author of the *Crónicas anónimas* accepted her as a dispenser of regalian justice. The fact that the queen's authority resonated even at the distance of a century or so also helps to counterbalance the possibility that, because the town and monastery of Sahagún are in the Tierra de Campos, Berenguela's role in the case was unusually prominent. Local memory of her authority was strong enough that the fourteenth-century chronicler depicted her without hesitation in a powerful judicial role.

Occasionally, Beatriz—the other queen of León-Castile—joined Berenguela and Fernando III in judicial acts. Both queens were “present and approving” for a 1231 diploma that confirmed the archbishop of Santiago as chancellor and chaplain of León, a post he had held under Alfonso IX. Similarly, all three monarchs intervened on behalf of the Order of Santiago in a dispute with the Order of San Marcos de León. Bishop Nuño of Astorga had ordered representatives of both military orders to appear at his court on the feast of St. John the Baptist. On that date, however, the master of Santiago sent “letters from the lord king, and from the lady queens” to Bishop Nuño, requesting a yearlong postponement—which the bishop granted.⁴⁶ The queen-consort's share in regalian prerogatives is obvious. But the evidence for

her activities is much sparser and less varied than the evidence for Berenguela's. While this may be an accident of documentary survival, Beatriz's repeated absences from extant records in which Berenguela does appear—and the lack of documents in which she exercises similar sovereign authority in Berenguela's absence—suggests that her scope of power was simply less extensive. The gap between their respective roles remained as pronounced after 1230 as it had been before.

This fact is perhaps most strikingly illustrated by a handful of diplomas issued by Fernando III's son Alfonso (the future Alfonso X) in 1244. Like many of his predecessors, the infante was already beginning to exercise sovereign authority as heir-apparent during his father's reign, though he could not yet act independently. Having concluded a successful campaign in Murcia, Alfonso rewarded his knights and supporters by giving them castles. He issued the five diplomas that record these gifts "with the approval of the King my father and of Queen doña Berenguela," *con plazer del Rey mio padre et de la Reyna domna Berengella*.⁴⁷

Although written in romance, as royal diplomas of this period increasingly were,⁴⁸ this formula echoes the one used for Berenguela's approval of Fernando III's acts. Its appearance in a diploma of Infante Alfonso's is striking for two reasons. First, the fact that the infante needed to cite his father's approval in order to validate his act confirms that this formula of consent was no empty gesture. Alfonso did not yet have full authority to alienate royal property, so his acts needed the confirmation of someone who did.⁴⁹ This indicates that when Fernando III cited Berenguela's consent in his diplomas, the formula carried similar formal significance—further demonstrating that Berenguela held sovereign authority in her own right, independent of her son. Second, her authority is again demonstrated by the fact that not only Fernando III but also his son sought her consent for official acts. Fernando III was the universally recognized king of Castile and León, and if he were the sole sovereign authority in those kingdoms, then his approval should have been all that the infante needed. Any argument that Berenguela was included in Fernando III's diplomas simply out of affection, informal influence, or filial piety is contradicted by these diplomas. Certainly Infante Alfonso shared a familial bond with his grandmother, but he did not owe her the personal debts that Fernando III did, which have often been accepted as sufficient reason for Berenguela's ubiquity in her son's diplomas.

The evidence for Berenguela's formal authority after 1230 is plentiful and diverse. In both royal and individual documents, she appears as a legitimate

actor for the crown—a role confirmed by narrative and anecdotal accounts. What is more, her authority extended beyond the bounds of Castile. From the earliest days of the union, she and Fernando III incorporated León into their well-established plural reign. The fact that she maintained her authority and her prominence even in a kingdom where she had no legitimate right to rule testifies both to her acuity and to her indispensability at court.

The Haro and Castro Rebellions

Lope Díaz de Haro had been one of Berenguela's, and hence of Fernando III's, staunchest supporters since 1217, and his service had been generously rewarded. He had held the office of *alférez* ever since Fernando III had come to power, and the king had not stinted in bestowing other prizes on him.⁵⁰ But during the siege of Úbeda, which ran from January till July 1233, Lope Díaz began to feel that the king was slighting him. His resentment grew until finally he left the court, "full of wrath and indignation, mostly because—as he said—he had perceived, through many indications, that he was despised and contemptible in the king's eyes."⁵¹

Our only source for this rebellion is the CLRC, and in the CLRC the monarchs of Castile cannot be in the wrong. We therefore have no hint about the conflicts—surely significant ones—that led Lope Díaz to abandon his king. González suggests, probably rightly, that the dispute centered on the seventeen castles that later formed the basis for a settlement between Lope Díaz and the crown.⁵² But whatever the problem was, it quickly spread beyond the Haro family. After departing from court, Lope Díaz married one of his daughters, Mencía López, to Álvaro Pérez de Castro. Through this union, "as they declared, Álvaro Pérez was tied to Lope Díaz with the firmest bond, against common enemies. Everyone else suspected that their alliance was formed against the king's familiars—I will not say against the king. That became evident later."⁵³

Álvaro Pérez was another longtime supporter of the king's, though his fidelity had not been quite as unimpeachable as that of Lope Díaz.⁵⁴ The Castro were a powerful family and a dangerous ally for the Haro in a time of rebellion. The crown had to act quickly to dissolve their alliance, and the obvious starting point was the marriage itself.

Álvaro Pérez and Mencía López were third cousins once removed.⁵⁵ Their marriage was thus consanguineous and canonically invalid. Fernando

III and Berenguela were at Burgos when they learned of the wedding. Some of their court prelates—Rodrigo of Toledo, Mauricio of Burgos, Bernardo of Segovia, and Juan of Osma—hastily consulted with the bishop of Astorga and “other experts in law,” and determined that the marriage was a case of manifest incest. Accordingly, the prelates excommunicated Álvaro Pérez and Mencía López. The monarchs also seized on another technicality: they claimed that the marriage should not have proceeded without Fernando III’s consent, since he was Mencía López’s uncle and Mencía belonged to Queen Beatriz’s household.⁵⁶

Seeing how the wind was blowing, Álvaro Pérez dug himself in at his town of Paredes, in the Tierra de Campos between Palencia and Carrión. Although Fernando III had already stripped him of the royal tenancies he held, Álvaro Pérez declared that the *fueros* of Castile gave him the right to remain on his own land. The king disagreed. Álvaro Pérez had fortified Paredes with weapons and men in a way that smacked of armed rebellion, and Fernando III, “consumed with wrath,” gathered his noble followers and the men of the nearby towns to attack Paredes.⁵⁷

Álvaro Pérez quailed:

But Álvaro Pérez, making use of more sensible advice, placed himself at the will and pleasure of the queens, doña Berenguela and doña Beatriz. Having taken counsel with wise [*prudentes*] men, they ordered Álvaro Pérez to leave Paredes as it had been before, and to leave the kingdom entirely and go to the land of the Saracens, and remain there or elsewhere until he could recover the king’s favor.⁵⁸

As in the 1220s, the monarchs quashed noble rebellions with a combination of force and tact. Fernando III supplied the military might, and the queens—both of them, in this case—offered a more clement alternative. Their sentence of exile was considerably more severe than the deal Berenguela had struck with Gonzalo Pérez de Molina a decade before, but the monarchs were stronger than they had been ten years earlier. In 1221 Fernando III had had to ransom royal tenancies from the Cameros brothers; now he seized them from Álvaro Pérez de Castro without fanfare. And despite his own high standing in the kingdom, Álvaro Pérez tamely accepted exile rather than face the king’s anger.⁵⁹

With his ally removed from the scene, Lope Díaz de Haro’s options were narrowing. He, too, sought reconciliation from the distaff side of the

crown. But, unlike Álvaro Pérez, he appealed only to his friend and patron, Berenguela:

Lope Díaz acknowledged that seventeen castles which he held from the kingdom of Castile, but which he had not received through the [king's] porter, belonged to the king, and he received them from the king's hand, through his porter. The land was guaranteed to him for five years by Queen doña Berenguela, under complete and honest terms, and her son confirmed what his mother had done.⁶⁰

Considering that Lope Díaz's discontent had provoked this crisis in the first place, the terms were generous. But in addition to the considerable power he held in his own right, which alone made him a valuable ally, his nearly twenty-year friendship with Berenguela must have counted for something when the two of them negotiated. This episode shows us a longtime client of the queen's—a client who was also one of the highest-ranking men in Castile—turning to her in an effort to resolve his dispute with the crown.⁶¹ From what the CLRC tells us, their negotiations did not involve the “good cop/bad cop” scenario that the monarchs had used with Álvaro Pérez. There is no suggestion that Fernando III used or threatened to use force against Lope Díaz. This seems to be borne out by the mutual benefits of the deal the magnate ultimately struck: he acknowledged that he held certain castles as tenancies rather than patrimony, but was able to keep them anyway, and Berenguela ensured he would retain their tenancies for at least five years. It was a far milder settlement than Álvaro Pérez's indefinite exile, which was apparently unleavened by any concessions from the crown.

Moreover, Berenguela had the authority to negotiate with Lope Díaz independently. She even had some control over the distribution of royal tenancies. The documentary evidence indicates that this was so as early as her reign in León, but here Juan of Osma offers narrative confirmation. As ever, Fernando III's consent was necessary to validate the agreement, but the chronicle implies that his role involved little more than rubber-stamping decisions that Berenguela had already made. The case is in keeping with the CLRC's own earlier claim that Berenguela's customary role was to “anticipate [the king's] desires with maternal sweetness and carry them out to most distinguished effect before [he had] fully conceived them”⁶²—or, in less refined terms, to make decisions for him.

Even if Álvaro Pérez's fate was harsher than that of Lope Díaz, it was intended more as a warning than a punishment. At the start of Lent in 1235, Álvaro Pérez set out for Andalusí territory as instructed:

But the queens, extremely wise ladies, foreseeing the evils that could befall our borders from an alliance between Álvaro Pérez and Ibn Húd, the king of the Moors on this side of the sea, worked successfully to restore Álvaro Pérez to the king's favor. And this was done, and so he recovered his land and castles.⁶³

Having brokered Álvaro Pérez's exile, Beatriz and Berenguela now revoked it. They were unlikely to have overlooked the dangers of sending a disgraced magnate into al-Andalus when they first came to terms with Álvaro Pérez. Their intercession with Fernando III seems to have been a ploy, intended to reinforce the monarchs' chosen image of a king whose righteous wrath could be tempered through appeal to the feminine mercy and charity of the queens. Such imagery carries strong religious allusions. Human sinners feared the stern justice of Christ the King, but they could call on the mercy of his mother, Mary, and his spouse, the Church. The monarchs used these parallels to emphasize the crown's supreme and God-given authority, but Berenguela's tacit association with the Queen of Heaven also put her partnership with Fernando III into an acceptable context for their subjects.⁶⁴ Mary, though subordinate to her son in the divine hierarchy, had great spiritual power and was venerated in her own right; and, like Berenguela, she combined the glory of queenship with the virtuous tenderness of motherhood. Identifying Berenguela with the sexually pure and sinless Mary also soothed the cultural anxieties provoked by her gender, by distancing her from the carnal, sinful, and "fallen" feminine embodied by Eve.⁶⁵

Berenguela's settlement with Lope Díaz held for the rest of her old friend's life. In 1241, however, Lope Díaz's son and successor, Diego López de Haro, rebelled again. The king, newly returned from Córdoba, had an unspecified disagreement with Diego López, which turned violent after Fernando III revoked his tenancies. Cowed by Fernando III's raids on his lands, Diego López agreed to meet the king and his eldest son, Alfonso, at Miranda; they then brought him to Valladolid, where "The queens, [Fernando's] mother and his wife, were."⁶⁶ The agreement reached there soon broke down, leaving Diego López once again to throw himself on the king's mercy. "And the king then took to the road, and returned to Burgos, where the queens

were. They advised the king to pardon that don Diego, and return all the land he had previously held, and even to include Alcaraz as well, which he [Diego López] had not held before.”⁶⁷ In this case, the peacemaking queens were Berenguela and Fernando III’s second wife, Juana, who had now stepped into Beatriz’s intercessory role. Clearly, the monarchs felt they had found a successful method for dealing with their nobles.

After the union of Castile and León, as well as before, Berenguela retained her prominent place in the plural monarchy. If anything, her partnership with Fernando III had become more refined. In the case of noble rebellions, for instance, their roles were more distinct in the mid-1230s than in the mid-1220s, when Berenguela had muddied her image as a separate court of appeal by accompanying the royal army on its march to besiege Gonzalo Pérez de Molina at Zafra. Evidence of her participation in judicial acts is also much more common during this period—perhaps a signal that she had become more active in this area, but perhaps an accident of documentary survival that obscures similar activity in earlier years. Finally, her queenship was widely recognized among her subjects, just as it had been before 1230.

Such evidence shows how León-Castile’s plural monarchy functioned and how it was perceived by contemporaries. As significant as it is, however, it is perhaps the least remarkable of the information about Berenguela that survives from this period. She continued to rule beside her son in Castile and León, certainly; but she also continued to wield even greater authority in her personal domains and abroad—especially among her clients and her patrimony in the Tierra de Campos.

Berenguela’s Personal Lordship

In addition to reigning alongside Fernando III in Castile, Berenguela had also exercised virtually sovereign authority within her own possessions in the Tierra de Campos, and this did not change after 1230. The men we already know as her clients continued to climb to the heights of power. All of them were, of course, also in the service of Fernando III, and they received his patronage too. But the enduring strength of their bond with Berenguela is illustrated by Lope Díaz de Haro’s reliance on her intercession, which I have already discussed, and by the unswerving fidelity of men like García Fernández de Villamayor.

The Queen's Men

In February 1243, doña Mayor Ordóñez asked the abbess of Las Huelgas to send her clerics and friars who could help her make her will, and with whom she could take vows as a Cistercian nun. She was on her deathbed, and wished to become a member of the community at Las Huelgas. The abbess complied:

When they arrived, they found her of sound mind, and asked her what she wanted. She said that she wanted the order [i.e., to enter the Cistercian Order], and that she had always had [this right] as a privilege from Queen doña Berenguela. She left her body and possessions and all her *heredades* in the power of Queen doña Berenguela and of the abbess of the monastery of Burgos [Las Huelgas], doña Inés. And they gave her the order.⁶⁸

Mayor Ordóñez was a woman of means. The wealth she distributed in her will—not including an *heredad* she left to Las Huelgas, or whatever remained from her other properties after her bequests were paid—totaled 898 maravedís.⁶⁹ That was enough to buy about eighteen warhorses—each one a luxury item and an unmistakable marker of wealth and class—or to pay the salary of a canon in the cathedral of Burgos for eleven years.⁷⁰ She must also have been personally attached to Berenguela, if the queen had assured her of entry into Las Huelgas at her death.⁷¹ Her will therefore offers us a rare glimpse of Berenguela within a world of female sociability. The extant chronicles and most documentary sources, which were overwhelmingly written and mediated by men, portray Berenguela operating almost exclusively in a masculine world. When other women do appear, they are usually members of her immediate family, and their relationship to her is described only in the context of patriarchal order—marriage, war, royal succession, the exercise of formal authority, and so on.⁷² As the testament of a woman who was also one of Berenguela's noble clients, Mayor Ordóñez's will offers a feminine perspective on the queen's patronage.

Mayor Ordóñez seems to have been still in Berenguela's service when her will was made, because she asked the queen to supervise its execution:⁷³

And I ask my lady the queen, as a gift, not to permit anyone, not even my relatives, to make any changes to this will until all my debts

and all my bequests are paid, and that she arrange things justly for anyone to whom they [my executors] sell it [my property]; and [that she ensure] that if anything is left over, they [my executors] give it to my heirs.⁷⁴

A handful of surviving charters suggest a conjectural biography for Mayor Ordóñez—one that, if accurate, reinforces Berenguela's personal ties to the nobility of the Burgos region. Mayor's will identifies her as the daughter of Ordoño Pérez, and mentions that she had a nephew by that name too.⁷⁵ Given the propensity of Iberian families to reiterate names from generation to generation, that information helps to indicate local men who may have been her relatives. In 1231, Fernando III confirmed and sealed a substantial property transaction between the abbot of Gumiel de Izán, on the one hand, and don Ordoño Pérez and his wife Urraca Rodríguez on the other. The parties traveled to the king's court in the city of León to secure his approval;⁷⁶ that he gave it indicates, like the transaction itself, that Ordoño Pérez and Urraca Rodríguez were persons of status. They presumably hailed from the region of Burgos, where Gumiel de Izán was. If so, this Ordoño Pérez may be identified with a man who was serving as an *alcalde* of Burgos in 1243. That year he witnessed a charter as "don Ordoño, the *alcalde*"; the next witness was "don Pedro Ordóñez, his son."⁷⁷ It is possible, then, that "don Ordoño the *alcalde*" was Mayor Ordóñez's father, Ordoño Pérez; that his son Pedro Ordóñez was her brother; and that *his* son was the Ordoño Pérez who appears as Mayor's nephew in her will. A town's *alcaldes* were high-ranking men, the heads of its council and the ones responsible for ensuring that its *fueros* were observed.⁷⁸ The daughter of an *alcalde* of Burgos might certainly claim the wealth and status evident in Mayor Ordóñez's will. If she was the *alcalde*'s daughter, then her tie to Berenguela shows that the queen's patronage extended into the top tier of Burgos's citizenry, as well as into Las Huelgas.⁷⁹

We have already encountered another of Berenguela's clients, García Fernández de Villamayor, as a Tierra de Campos magnate who followed his father into the queen's service. He was her *majordomo* throughout Fernando III's reign in Castile; after the union of Castile and León, he ascended even higher. In 1231, Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón—Fernando III's *majordomo* and Berenguela's longtime ally—left his office and the royal court.⁸⁰ Gonzalo was well advanced in age, having by this time been a fixture at court for nearly forty years, and having served as *majordomo* virtually without interruption

for close to thirty-five.⁸¹ His departure was probably due to infirmity, for he died not long afterward.⁸²

In their quest for an equally trustworthy man to fill Gonzalo Rodríguez's office, the monarchs turned to Berenguela's former majordomo, García Fernández de Villamayor. By early 1232, he was confirming diplomas as the king's majordomo. As Berenguela's majordomo, García Fernández had enjoyed unprecedented rank and authority, but this was undeniably a promotion.

It was not a permanent one, though. By September 1238, the office of king's majordomo had gone to Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón's son, Rodrigo González.⁸³ But García Fernández remained at court, confirming diplomas ahead of all other Castilian magnates except the majordomo, the *alférez*, and Infante Alfonso, the heir. By the following year, he had also resumed his office as Berenguela's majordomo.⁸⁴ In his will of 1240, he entrusted his bequests, his property, his wife, and the monastery he had founded at Villamayor to Fernando III, Berenguela, and the future Alfonso X, whose boyhood tutor he had been. He also made individual bequests to the infante and the queen; Berenguela was to receive three of his hunting falcons.⁸⁵ As Berenguela grew older, so did the men who had been her companions and supporters throughout her career; and she was fated to outlive many of them.

One of these was Juan of Osma, author of the CLRC. In April 1230, Fernando III confirmed Juan in his office as chancellor, while simultaneously affirming that the head of Castile's chancery was the archbishop of Toledo—in this case, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada. That arrangement had been the status quo for the last thirteen years, so Fernando III's decision to restate it formally, in a diploma that included the text of Alfonso VIII's 1206 privilege granting the chancery to the archbishop of Toledo, invites questions. So does the agreement made between Rodrigo and Juan eight months later, with royal sanction, in which Juan acknowledged Rodrigo's authority over him.⁸⁶ Why was it necessary to (re-)formalize these arrangements now?

One answer is that Archbishop Rodrigo had grown anxious, suspecting that Juan's control of the chancery had advanced to the point of eroding his own authority there. Given Rodrigo's characteristic jealousy of Toledo's privileges, this is the most likely explanation,⁸⁷ but nothing indicates why he became so concerned in 1230 and not before. The suggestive proximity of these agreements to Fernando III's accession in León offers another possible motive, especially when coupled with the two similar documents from 1231 that first confirm the archbishop of Compostela's possession of the Leonese

chancery, and then (seven months later) formally establish Juan of Osma as chancellor under his authority.⁸⁸ Clearly, Fernando III was consolidating control of the Leonese chancery in Juan's hands, just as he had done with the Castilian chancery. It is unlikely, however, that he issued his diploma of April 1230 with an eye to uniting the two kingdoms' chanceries in the person of one loyal agent, since in April 1230 no one anticipated that Alfonso IX would die five months later.⁸⁹ Rather, he appears to have repeated in León what he had done in Castile. In both cases Fernando III, like many of his contemporaries, sought to bring his chancery under the more direct control of the crown.⁹⁰

It was also in 1230 that the bishopric of Osma fell open. Its incumbent, Pedro, returned to his native Navarre to become bishop of Pamplona, and had been confirmed in that office by July 1230. By May 1231, the king's chancellor, Juan, had been elected the new bishop of Osma.⁹¹ This was undoubtedly remuneration for Juan's service to the crown. Still, it invites the question of why Juan had never received episcopal honors before. There had been no lack of opportunities; the sees of Ávila, Calahorra, and Cuenca (twice) had all become available during Fernando III's reign in Castile, but Juan was never a candidate for them. None of these sees was among Castile's wealthiest, but then again, neither was Osma. Juan's appointment as bishop of Osma may have been facilitated by Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's influence there. Rodrigo had himself been bishop-elect of Osma briefly in 1209, and the see's latest occupant had been one of Rodrigo's clients.⁹² He could have smoothed the way for the cathedral chapter to elect the crown's preferred candidate.⁹³

Juan's career was not all promotions, however. In fact, Fernando III actively worked to prevent him from gaining one particularly plum office. When the see of León fell vacant in late 1235, its cathedral chapter voted to make the royal chancellor their next bishop. The pope duly confirmed their choice, only to receive anxious letters and envoys from Fernando III, begging him to revoke the election. Juan, said the king, was "a man of great counsel, useful and necessary to [him] and to the kingdom," and his removal from Osma would mean great hardship for that see.⁹⁴ This was at best disingenuous; serving as bishop of León would no more remove Juan and his counsel from the king's side than serving as bishop of Osma had done. But serving as bishop of León *would*, according to the terms of Juan's 1231 agreement with Archbishop Rodrigo, disqualify Juan from serving as chancellor; that agreement had specified that if Juan became bishop of some city outside

Toledo's province, he had to relinquish the chancery to the archbishop's control. If Fernando III wanted to keep his chancellor, he could not allow Juan to become the bishop of León. Whether or not Gregory IX knew what "necessity" drove the king's petition, he let himself be persuaded, and translated Bishop Martín of Zamora to the see of León instead.⁹⁵ A few years later, by way of recompense, the monarchs engineered Juan's election to the wealthy bishopric of Burgos, as the replacement for their old partisan Bishop Mauricio.⁹⁶

We have no direct evidence that Berenguela, along with her son, brought about Juan's election as bishop of Burgos. But her early patronage of Juan, her stature at court, her close ties to Burgos, and her long reliance on the late Bishop Mauricio—which gave her good reason for an interest in choosing his successor—all argue that she did.⁹⁷ Certainly her personal relationship with the chancellor remained warm in these declining years of both their lives. At the end of September 1246, as he was dying in Palencia, Juan made his will, listing his debts and appointing five executors to see that his wishes were carried out. They were Berenguela, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, the dean of Burgos, the archdeacon of Valpuesta, and one of the royal notaries.⁹⁸ Other luminaries were on hand; the will was made in the presence of the archbishop of Compostela and the bishop of Astorga, as well as that of Archbishop Rodrigo. But the people to whom Juan entrusted his bequests were his old allies and patrons, Rodrigo and Berenguela.⁹⁹

Dominion in the Tierra de Campos

Evidence for Berenguela's tenancies and tenants in the Tierra de Campos becomes more limited during her later life. It is, nevertheless, rare to see anyone else named as tenant of the towns and castles that had become associated with her, through her arras or otherwise. She also seems to have recovered—or perhaps to have retained—control of certain properties during this period. The castle of Aguilar de Pedraio, in Galicia, had been assigned to her as arras by Alfonso IX. In the Treaty of Cabreros, it was among the castles that she and Alfonso IX had ceded to their son. But in 1238, Fernando III gave Aguilar de Pedraio to the archbishop-elect and cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. As always, the king acted by Berenguela's "agreement and approval," but the diploma goes on to explain her role more fully: "The donation of the aforesaid castle is made at the insistence and approval of the

venerable queen my mother, doña Berenguela, to whom the castle belonged by right of dower, so that in the church of Compostela her memory may be perpetually honored, both in life and in death.”¹⁰⁰

The gift of Aguilar de Pedraio came more than thirty years after the Treaty of Cabreros, when Fernando III's accession in León should have mooted any question about his control of the castles given him in that agreement. But Berenguela apparently still had some authority over Aguilar de Pedraio. The diploma's statement that the castle “belonged to her by right of dower” (*iure dotalicii pertinebat*) is ambiguous, since it can be read to mean that Aguilar had belonged to Berenguela only in the past; and Fernando III also refers to Aguilar as “my castle,” *castellum meum*. Still, the diploma emphasizes Berenguela as the source of the donation, and expects it to be eternally associated with her memory. These things suggest that her links to Aguilar de Pedraio were more current than the long-sundered rights granted by her arras some forty years earlier.¹⁰¹

Three places where Berenguela clearly remained powerful in her own right during these years were Valencia, Valladolid, and the city of León itself. While there is, again, little information on the tenancy of Valladolid during this period, I will discuss Berenguela's repeated presence there throughout the rest of this chapter. Her possession of Valencia, by contrast, is as unmistakable as ever. In the early 1230s, charters frequently describe her as “reigning” (*regnans*) there, and name Morán Pérez or Lope Díaz as her tenants. She also had her own merino in the town, a man named Juan Longo; he is listed in dating formulas as her agent, while the tenant's merino is identified separately.¹⁰² Berenguela's use of a personal merino in Valencia indicates that her role there was truly like that of a reigning sovereign. Royal tenants appointed merinos in their tenancies as administrators, but there was also a hierarchy of royal merinos who operated across the kingdom, with the crown's merino mayor at their head. If Valencia had a merino under Berenguela's direct control, then it was set somewhat or entirely apart from this network of royal merinos and placed firmly within the jurisdiction of the queen.

Charters from the mid-1240s again confirm Berenguela's possession of Valencia, now with one Alfonso Pérez as her tenant.¹⁰³ But her lordship in Valencia—and elsewhere in the Tierra de Campos—in the meantime is confirmed by a handful of remarkable documents: writs issued by Berenguela herself.

There were ongoing disputes between the town of Valencia and the canons of San Isidoro de León. The first evidence of this comes from an undated

letter addressed to “the illustrious doña Berenguela, queen of Castile and Toledo” by the abbot, archdeacon, and one canon of San Isidoro, in response to a letter they had received from Berenguela:

From the letters that you sent to us, we understand clearly that the men of Algades and of Santa Marina complained to your excellency that the abbot and convent of San Pedro de Eslonza are not allowing them to go to settle in Valencia, even though they are prepared to observe the right and *fuego* that they were accustomed to observe for the abbot and convent of San Pedro and their predecessors. They also complained that concerning this, we asked them to come to León and answer to the abbot in an ecclesiastical court, and because they refused to come, we excommunicated them. To all of the afore-said things we reply that if those men observed or wished to observe their *fuegos* or pay their dues to the monastery of San Pedro, the abbot and convent would never have complained to the lord pope, and the lord pope would never have delegated a case of this kind to us. . . . Finally, we wish your excellency to know that they were never forbidden by the abbot and convent of San Pedro to go to settle or dwell in Valencia, or wherever they wished, as long as they observed the *fuegos* and rights of the monastery of San Pedro. Therefore we beg your excellency not to obstruct the apostolic mandate.¹⁰⁴

The residents of Algades and Santa Marina were vassals of the monastery of San Pedro de Eslonza, and the monastery wanted to ensure that they would continue to pay the exactions that they were required to pay, even if they moved out of the monastery’s dominions. The would-be settlers appealed to Berenguela because she was *domina* of Valencia; they would become her subjects if they settled there. Berenguela had also taken the monastery of Eslonza under her personal protection while she was queen of León,¹⁰⁵ which may have given her another interest in the case. But where the townspeople had appealed to her, Eslonza had appealed to the pope. He, in turn, had delegated the case to the abbot and canons of San Isidoro, who now advised the queen not to interfere.

The fact that would-be immigrants to Valencia sought Berenguela’s protection shows that she held royal authority in that town. It was no longer merely a property of the crown (in which case the matter might have more

effectively been brought to Fernando III); it was the queen's possession outright. And, despite the letter's unsubtle suggestion that Berenguela was meddling in ecclesiastical affairs, that the residents of Algades and Santa Marina applied to her at all suggests that they believed she could exert influence, if not real authority, over Eslonza and San Isidoro.

Since this letter is undated, it is impossible to be sure when the dispute took place. Because the letter addresses Berenguela as "queen of Castile and Toledo," González surmised that it was written before 1230.¹⁰⁶ But there is no shortage of documents in which Berenguela refers to herself, and is referred to, as queen only of Castile even after 1230. Three of them deal with issues very similar to this one.

These three are writs that Berenguela issued to certain of her towns in the Tierra de Campos, advising them to respect the rights of San Isidoro de León. The first, which is dated only to March 24 but which again titles Berenguela "queen of Castile and Toledo," was issued in Valladolid and addressed to Valderas, Valencia, and Villalpando. It instructs the councils, tax collectors, and tenants of those towns to ensure that a fourth of the tribute they levy on any vassals of San Isidoro is sent on to San Isidoro and not retained by her agents.¹⁰⁷ Clearly San Isidoro had appealed to her again, this time on their own behalf; and it seems that in this case she took a different view of preserving ecclesiastical rights within her towns. Most significantly, however, the writ demonstrates that Berenguela exercised the same kind of lordship in Valderas and Villalpando that she did in the much better documented case of Valencia.¹⁰⁸

A second writ, also issued in Valladolid and dated March 24, 1238, is addressed not only to these same three towns but also to Castroverde and Villafrechós:

Berenguela, by the grace of God queen of Castile and Toledo, to the councils of Valencia and of Valderas, of Villalpando, of Castroverde and of Villafrechós, greetings and affection. The cathedral chapter of Santa María [de León] complained to me that you are collecting *portazgo* [toll] on the animals that carry the bread and wine of the canonry [of San Isidoro], or of the canons for their households. And if this is so, I hold that you are unjustly doing them harm. Therefore I firmly order you not to collect *portazgo* for any reason on their bread or their wine, either that which belongs to the canonry [of San Isidoro] or that which belongs to the cathedral chapter [of León]

. . . or on their animals, either those they own or those they rent or borrow. And if anyone collects *portazgo* from them on these things, he will pay me a penalty of one hundred maravedís.¹⁰⁹

The similarity of content, date, and location suggests that these two writs were issued at the same time.¹¹⁰ In form and in tone, they echo writs issued by the king. Examples of such documents issued by royal tenants, or even by nobles concerning issues within their own patrimony, are lacking. The fact that the cathedral chapter of León appealed to Berenguela on these issues is particularly notable; unlike the men of Algades and Santa Marina, they were not seeking the protection of one lord against another, but asking a higher authority to intervene with her subjects on their behalf. Once more, Berenguela obliged, and warned the town councils that anyone disobeying her commands would have to pay a hefty fine to her—not, as royal writs and diplomas customarily required, to the king. All these things demonstrate Berenguela's sovereign authority in these towns—not just Valderas, Valencia, and Villalpando, but Castroverde and Villafrechós as well. Castroverde had been given to Berenguela in the Donation of Burgos, in 1207; Villafrechós had come to her in the Treaty of Cabrerros, though the Donation of Burgos had ceded her the last regalian right Alfonso IX retained there, that of *yantar*.¹¹¹ Like the other three towns, these two had remained under her control since then.

The last of the three writs also concerns the rights of the canons of León, this time in Valencia alone. Some vassals who held the canons' properties within Valencia's demesne were selling those properties to residents of Valencia, who then refused to pay the required tribute to the canons. Berenguela ordered the council of Valencia to ensure that no one was permitted to buy the properties in question unless the buyer actually resided on the property and paid the canons their due; she informed the council that she was instructing her tenant in Valencia to see to this as well. The writ, issued in 1242, was made in Valladolid like the others.¹¹² The fact that all of the independent diplomas that we know Berenguela to have issued during this period—diplomas that, moreover, assert her sovereign authority within her Tierra de Campos possessions so explicitly—were made in Valladolid strongly suggests that that town also remained under her control. It seems to have served almost as her "capital"; she was in Valladolid frequently, but there is no record of her presence in her other Tierra de Campos towns. This may be because Berenguela traveled either with the king or with a court of her own,

and Valladolid, larger and wealthier than her other towns, was better able to cope with the economic and logistical demands of the court's presence. But even if her reliance on Valladolid as the foremost among her Tierra de Campos possessions was not deliberate, it bound her to Valladolid no less strongly.

These documents also suggest a close relationship between Berenguela and the ecclesiastical powers of León, given that she defended the Leonese canons' rights against her own agents and towns. Her tenancies in the same period help to explain this. After the unification of León and Castile, Fernando III kept certain tenancies within the royal family. The city of León was one example. Soon after his accession, Fernando III gave León to his wife, Beatriz, who held it until her death. It then passed to Berenguela, and after her to Fernando III's firstborn, Infante Alfonso.¹¹³ In March 1238, when she issued her first two writs regarding the rights of the canons of León, Berenguela was tenant of the city,¹¹⁴ and thus had an even greater interest in the problem than she had as *domina* of the towns in question. Her vigilance on the canons' behalf may have sprung from efforts to create or maintain a good relationship between them and herself as the city's tenant. But the tenancy of León also strengthened her position in the Tierra de Campos. Her extensive demesne there was complemented and consolidated by control over the region's most important city.

The documentary evidence demonstrates that Berenguela's dominion in the Tierra de Campos remained as vital as ever. The importance of her possessions there diminished somewhat after 1230, when the Leonese-Castilian border effectively disappeared, taking Berenguela's role as mediator between the two kingdoms with it. The fact has a certain irony, since it was Berenguela's possessions in the Tierra de Campos that made the union of León and Castile possible, first by enabling Berenguela to rise to prominence and ultimately by serving as Fernando III's steppingstone to the Leonese crown. But their economic significance did not diminish, and neither did their personal value for Berenguela. She continued to enjoy independent authority there, and from her seat in the Tierra de Campos she could extend that authority into both León and Castile.

Regent, Lieutenant, or Reigning Monarch?

The years after 1230 saw the greatest successes of Fernando III's military career. After 1224, when he began campaigning in al-Andalus, he went to war

nearly every year—a practice that dramatically expanded the kingdom of León-Castile¹¹⁵ but also presented familiar logistical problems for the crown. Who would oversee the business of the kingdom during the king's absence?

This was another context in which plural monarchy was essential, and in which it increased the authority available to royal women. Across Europe, from the thirteenth century on, women of the royal family frequently governed while the king was away. Granted, León-Castile's monarchs did not contend with the challenges of distance and duration that came with crusades to the Holy Land or North Africa. Iberian kings fought closer to home, in campaigns that lasted a matter of months, and during which the king could communicate relatively quickly with his domestic agents.¹¹⁶ The family members who managed their kingdoms were therefore not regents in the sense that Blanche of Castile, say, was regent for Louis IX during his crusades. Nevertheless, we can observe, at least in part, how royal authority functioned in León-Castile during Fernando's absences. Lucas of Tuy reports:

Queen Berenguela, his mother, was of such supreme wisdom that she managed everything in the administration of the kingdom wisely and nobly. Because of this, the king safely prolonged his campaigns against the Saracens, for Queen Berenguela wisely filled his place in the kingdom of León and Castile. And both kingdoms rejoiced in such great security and peace that no one, whether great or small, dared to seize another's possessions by violence. . . . While he was on campaign, Queen Berenguela sent her son, King Fernando, an abundance of knights, horses, gold, silver, food, and whatever was necessary for his armies.¹¹⁷

Lucas describes Berenguela standing in for the king in his absence, allowing Fernando to invest more time in the crusade—and doing her job extremely well. His assertion that Berenguela also acted as a kind of quartermaster-general, managing supply lines for Fernando III's army in the field, is echoed in Archbishop Rodrigo's account of the conquest of Córdoba in 1236. Once the king had taken the city and garrisoned it, he returned to Castile:

Therefore, having secured the city with residents and troops, King Fernando returned to Toledo, to the noble queen [Berenguela]. Equally delighted by the victory, inasmuch as she had managed everything through her counsel and assistance even though she was

absent, she thanked God with tears. For its ancient dignity, eroded by the indolence of princes, had been restored to Spain by her skill and her son's dedication.¹¹⁸

The conquest of Córdoba was one of Fernando III's greatest triumphs. In the experience of both Archbishop Rodrigo and Lucas of Tuy, it was probably the pinnacle of his achievements, since they both ended their histories before he conquered Seville in 1248. Yet both of them give Berenguela at least partial credit for his successes, and the DRH gives her virtually all the credit for Córdoba—it says that “she had managed everything” in the campaign from a distance, and attributes the victory to her “skill” (*sollercia*) but merely to Fernando III's “dedication” or “zeal” (*studium*). The language implies that she was the head of the operation, while Fernando III was only its sword arm. This may be an exaggeration—although, again, the DRH was commissioned by Fernando III, not Berenguela. But this passage leads into a lengthy paean on Berenguela's accomplishments and virtues, including the metaphor of Berenguela nursing her son cited earlier. In that context, it reads even more like an example of the queen's achievements.

Subtext aside, the DRH's account of Berenguela managing the campaign from a distance agrees with the CM's report that she handled the supply and provisioning of the army. And we have further evidence of her activities in another document that records Berenguela's involvement in the crusading effort—this one a royal diploma. In 1243, Archbishop Rodrigo gave Fernando III a series of recently conquered castles in exchange for rights to the towns of Añoover de Tajo and Baza, which were still under Almohad control. The idea was that Rodrigo would mount a campaign to conquer those towns, and would thereafter own them. The king agreed to assist Rodrigo's campaign: “I will help you, as will Queen doña Berenguela, my mother . . . and if it happens that you cannot win [the towns], I will not be bound to help you further.”¹¹⁹ Evidently, both Fernando III and Berenguela intended to provide material support to the archbishop's expedition. Archbishop Rodrigo was therefore very familiar with the ways in which Berenguela could participate in southern campaigns.

Here, then, is documentary evidence to support Lucas's description of Berenguela as quartermaster-general. For his other claim—that she ruled in Castile and León while Fernando III was on campaign—evidence is sparse, but not absent. The narrative sources attest that, as Fernando III spent increasing amounts of time on the southern frontier, he and Berenguela saw

each other less and less often. This bespoke no coldness between them; on the contrary, their reunions were joyful occasions, and while they were separated Berenguela was usually accompanied by Fernando's wife and younger children. The PCG describes Fernando III in 1238, "in Valladolid with his mother, the noble Queen doña Berenguela, and with his wife, Queen doña Juana, resting and enjoying himself with those two queens, by whom he was greatly loved."¹²⁰ If Berenguela's *assensus et beneplacitum* in Fernando III's diplomas was increasingly less likely to have been given in person, it was because the queen was growing older, less able to keep up with the demands of court travel. It was also because someone had to govern the realm while the king was at war.

Several documents show that there was a court in León-Castile that carried on the business of ruling in Fernando III's absence. In one, don Pedro Núñez de Guzmán and his wife, doña Urraca García, reached an agreement with the monastery of San Pedro de Gumiel and asked Infante Alfonso to seal it, "because the king is in the land of the Moors, and he [Alfonso] is overseeing the land."¹²¹ The infante here is probably Alfonso de Molina, Berenguela's younger son; he is accompanied by a miniature court that includes Fernando III's sons Fernando, Felipe, and Enrique. Other attendees include Juan of Osma, the chancellor, and a few magnates like Rodrigo Froilaz and Alfonso García de Villamayor, son of Berenguela's former majordomo García Fernández. This was certainly not the king's court, much of which would have been with him in "the land of the Moors." But it was a royal court, an extension of the plural monarchy. As such, it featured a few of Fernando III's most prominent officers, vassals, and relatives, and it was charged with "overseeing the land" in his absence. And, at least at this moment, it was located in Valladolid, Berenguela's town.¹²²

Alfonso de Molina was not always at his mother's side, however. The PCG regularly records him leading campaigns in the south, at Fernando III's behest.¹²³ Meanwhile, we can occasionally see Berenguela on her own in León-Castile, still surrounded by a miniature version of the royal court. This was the case, for example, when Juan of Osma made his will in Palencia, in the company of Berenguela, the archbishops of Compostela and Toledo, and the bishop of Astorga.¹²⁴ Such glimpses support the chroniclers' claims that in Fernando III's absence, the governance of León-Castile was mostly handled by his mother.

In February 1231, Fernando III sealed an agreement between the abbot of Santo Domingo de Silos and the family of don Pedro Martínez de Çafes.

The two parties had quarreled over the ownership of the castle of Pinilla; now, when everything was settled, the king confirmed the terms of their agreement. That agreement, however, had not been reached in his court: “we [the parties to the dispute] presented this aforesaid case in Toledo, before Queen doña Berenguela and before Infante don Alfonso, her son.”¹²⁵ The case had been argued before Berenguela and Alfonso de Molina on July 4, 1230.

In July 1230, Fernando III was on campaign, laying siege to the city of Jaén. The diploma itself suggests the king’s absence; its witnesses from July 1230 include none of the court’s noble or episcopal mainstays, many of whom were presumably in the field with Fernando III. Furthermore, the case was argued at Toledo, a city where the royal family often awaited the king’s return from crusade. Highly defensible, but close to the frontier and thus within easy communication distance of the army, Toledo was an ideal spot from which to monitor a southern campaign—and to handle the logistics of feeding and arming it, as Berenguela was probably doing. In the king’s absence, then, these quarreling parties sought regalian justice from Berenguela. She and her younger son, Alfonso de Molina, heard the case and resolved it with sovereign authority.¹²⁶

Finally, there is at least one extant record of Berenguela acting as a monarch without either of her sons. In late August 1240, several individuals sold property to the Hospital del Rey/de la Reina,¹²⁷ in Burgos. Their charter survives only in summary form, but the summary notes that the charter had been “confirmed by Queen doña Berenguela.” No other monarch is mentioned.¹²⁸ At the time, Fernando III was in Córdoba.¹²⁹ And by the 1240s, Alfonso de Molina was increasingly in demand as a trusted military commander for his brother; his expeditions in southern Iberia made him unavailable to assist Berenguela. She may have been accompanied by other members of the royal family—Queen Juana, or some of Fernando’s younger children—but none of them are said to have acted alongside her.

Berenguela’s authority in Fernando III’s absence was not necessarily equivalent to his. Like most of her exertions of regalian power outside her own properties, Berenguela’s decisions usually had to be confirmed by the king when he became available. And she did not always fill Fernando III’s place on her own; in addition to a small court of advisors, she sometimes had a masculine authority figure at her side in the person of her son Alfonso. But in León-Castile’s particular iteration of the plural monarchy, these things were necessary. Beyond her personal demesne, Berenguela’s formal authority

was incomplete without her son's. And in Fernando III's absence, her younger son could supply some (but not all) of that missing authority. The occasional need for a royal male to act with or in place of Berenguela does not diminish the significance of her role. As the kingdom's other inheriting monarch, she had legitimacy and authority that no other family member possessed. Moreover, the logistical demands of ruling a kingdom—while also managing the royal army's, or armies', supply lines—were heavy obligations that could not always be met by a single person. Indeed, given León-Castile's historical reliance on plural rule, it is unlikely that any single person was expected to meet them. Yet, in this reign as in others, they *were* met. We can therefore confidently say, along with the chroniclers, that Berenguela and Fernando III shared responsibility for the tremendous gains made in their period by the Castilian and Leonese crusade.

Foreign Affairs: Views of Berenguela Beyond Castile and León

In Chapter 5 I discussed cases in which Berenguela dealt independently with foreign powers, from the Almohads to the pope. Her career after 1230 includes many more such examples, even more remarkable in their depiction of Berenguela's prominence upon the European stage. The woman who usually insisted on titling herself "queen of Castile" was frequently perceived by foreigners as "queen of Castile and León." Evidently, outsiders saw no distinction between Berenguela's role in Castile, which she had inherited, and her role in León, where she technically had no claim to power. They also saw Berenguela as a queen whose authority was often equal to, and sometimes greater than, her son's.

The Marriage Market

At the close of 1235, Fernando III's wife Beatriz died. She had borne him at least ten children, of whom seven were sons; the throne of León-Castile was now well insulated from the paucity of male heirs that had troubled the two kingdoms in 1214, 1217, and 1230. The king mourned for a time; but by the end of 1236, Fernando III was thinking about remarriage. Berenguela was ready to assist him, for, according to the DRH, she was once again concerned

about his chastity. In this she was apparently not alone; even the pope reminded Fernando III that “it is better to marry than to burn,”¹³⁰ suggesting either that Berenguela’s anxiety was not just idiosyncratic or that she had communicated it to Gregory IX. In any case, Berenguela sought a suitable bride, and her sister Blanche provided one.

The lady was Jeanne (in Spanish, Juana), heir to the county of Ponthieu. Blanche had just narrowly prevented both heir and county from falling into the hands of Henry III of England, which would have alienated Ponthieu from the French crown. She now recommended Juana to Berenguela, and Fernando married his new queen in Burgos at the end of 1237.¹³¹

Juana received all the honors due to a queen-consort, but she seems to have been even more secondary to Berenguela than Beatriz had been. For a time, the intitulations of Fernando III’s diplomas continued to be structured as they had in the past: the king acted “together with” his wife and elder sons, and then “by the agreement and approval” of his mother. Beginning in 1238, however, the intitulation changed to give Berenguela precedence over both the queen-consort and the infantes: “I, King Fernando, by the grace of God king of Castile and Toledo, León, Galicia, and Córdoba, by the agreement and approval of Queen doña Berenguela, my mother, together with my wife Queen Juana, [and] with my sons Alfonso, Fadrique, and Fernando.”¹³² The chancery adhered to this new formula for the rest of Berenguela’s life. No evidence survives to explain the change, but it was not accidental, and evidently denoted a real increase in Berenguela’s formal stature.

As a queen newly married into a royal family well endowed with potential heirs, Juana’s status within Castile, and that of her children, was precarious. Inevitably, her interests clashed with those of her stepsons, especially with those of Infante Alfonso, the heir-apparent. Juana was likely to outlive her husband, and as a widow she would retain the arras lands he had given her, along with her seigniorial rights in them. She sided with some of Fernando III’s younger sons, particularly Infante Enrique, the fourth-born, in refusing to submit her properties formally to Alfonso’s authority as well as the king’s.¹³³ Numerous attempts were made to resolve the resulting disputes during the 1240s, none of them terribly successful. Berenguela was the architect of one such attempt.

In 1252, the Order of Calatrava catalogued the diplomas that it held in safekeeping for Juana. Among them were “three privileges sealed with wax seals, concerning the case . . . between you and don Alfonso, the king’s son.” One of the three “was made in Pozuelo de don Gil before Queen doña

Berenguela, and it is sealed with your seal and with that of don Alfonso.”¹³⁴ As she had done during Fernando III’s earlier absences on campaign, Berenguela had assumed the role of royal arbiter. But unlike previous cases in which she had done this, cases that involved noble and ecclesiastical subjects of the crown, this quarrel was between the queen-consort and the heir to León-Castile. To exercise regalian justice under such circumstances, Berenguela needed a formal authority superior to theirs. That she had it is attested by a 1245 diploma of her son’s. Though the Order of Calatrava gave no information about when the diplomas it catalogued had been issued, Fernando III and his court were in Pozuelo de don Gil in April 1245. At that time, he issued a privilege to the Order of Alcántara “with the agreement and approval of Queen doña Berenguela, my reigning [*regnans*] mother.”¹³⁵ This is the only known example of such language in Fernando III’s diplomas. If authentic, it must be viewed as an indication that Berenguela’s formal authority had grown still greater in her later years. This dovetails with the documentary evidence that at about the time this diploma was issued, Berenguela had attempted to resolve a critical dispute within the royal family.

Fernando III’s marriage was not the only one to fall within the scope of Berenguela’s matchmaking prowess. In 1239, the queen’s old ally Álvaro Pérez de Castro died, only a few years after his provocative marriage to Mencía López de Haro. Berenguela took it upon herself to arrange a second marriage for Mencía López, and the husband she chose was King Sancho II of Portugal, a lifelong bachelor. The match created some scandal in the Portuguese court; as the daughter of a magnate, even a high-ranking one, Mencía López was considered too lowborn to wed royalty. Moreover, the couple were just closely enough related for the marriage to be consanguineous, a problem for which they had (naturally) not obtained papal dispensation. Nevertheless, Sancho II married Mencía, “at the command of Queen Berenguela, his aunt”—and refused afterward to put her aside, even though she bore him no children.¹³⁶ Evidently, Berenguela could exercise considerable influence even over relatives beyond her own kingdom.¹³⁷

Her greatest marital project, though, centered on Fernando III’s heir, Infante Alfonso. Her first attempt came in 1234, when Alfonso was not yet thirteen. Thibault, king of Navarre and count of Champagne, had no legitimate male heirs and sought to forestall the Navarrese succession claims of Jaime I of Aragón-Cataluña. Early that fall he sent envoys to León-Castile, along with a letter addressed “To the most excellent and most dear doña Berenguela, by the grace of God queen of Castile and León, and to that most

illustrious man, his dearest friend, F[ernando], by the grace of God king of Castile and León.”¹³⁸

It is remarkable that Thibault accorded Berenguela the title of “queen of Castile and León,” which she rarely claimed for herself. Thibault recognized that Berenguela reigned in both kingdoms, which makes her own coyness on the subject seem like policy. Moreover, the fact Thibault addressed himself first to Berenguela, and only then to Fernando III, indicates that he expected to deal primarily with the queen.

Still, like other treaties in which Berenguela participated throughout her life, this one is framed as an agreement between the kings alone; Thibault’s letter is the only place where Berenguela is even mentioned. The pact concerned a marriage between Thibault’s daughter and heir, Blanche, and Infante Alfonso, which would unite their two realms. In return, Fernando III would consign valuable properties along the Navarrese-Castilian border to Thibault for his lifetime.¹³⁹ However, a month later Thibault concluded a treaty with Jaime I, casting doubt on his alliance with Fernando III. At the end of October, Thibault and Fernando III sealed a second and more detailed treaty that reiterated their commitment to the marriage alliance.¹⁴⁰ Conditions were set that would govern succession to Navarre in a variety of cases—if Thibault had more children in the future, say, or if Blanche died childless. Most striking is the provision for Thibault’s death without legitimate heirs:

Concerning this, we, the king of Navarre, grant and promise that if we should die without legitimate offspring, the kingdom of Navarre will devolve upon Queen doña Berenguela freely and without any diminution, unless another man or woman has greater right to the kingdom of Navarre.¹⁴¹

Like the earlier treaty, this one makes no other reference to Berenguela, and it gives no explanation of why she, rather than Fernando III or Infante Alfonso himself, should inherit Navarre in this situation. If Navarre had gone to Berenguela, she would certainly have bequeathed it in turn to her son or grandson, which makes the provision somewhat formulaic. However, one possible reason that Berenguela could inherit Navarre in the absence of other legitimate heirs was that the Castilian royal house claimed lordship over Thibault’s kingdom. In 1134, García VI of Navarre had done homage to Alfonso VII of León-Castile, an act that had allowed Castile to assert lordly rights

over Navarre at its convenience ever since. If the Navarrese royal house became defunct, then the kingdom should revert to the control of its overlord—the Castilian monarch, who in this case was apparently Berenguela.¹⁴²

Here again, Berenguela was formally recognized as the hereditary queen of Castile. In succeeding to her brother's throne, she had succeeded to his lordly rights; and in the absence of a marriage between heirs, if Navarre was to be joined to the Leonese-Castilian crown, then it had to happen through the rightful line of inheritance, which ran through Berenguela. Once more we see that in ceding royal power to her son, Berenguela had abdicated nothing. She remained a reigning queen and a legitimate sovereign authority, who alone could transfer the regalian rights of the Castilian (and hence the Navarrese) crown to Fernando III.

This clause also suggests that Berenguela had remained a significant presence in negotiations for these two treaties, as Thibault's initial letter had suggested she would. To some extent, her influence here must be described as informal—she was not acknowledged as an actor in either treaty, while Fernando III, Thibault, and even Infante Alfonso were. Yet Thibault's treaty and letter provide full evidence of her formal authority; Thibault had begun negotiating with “the queen of Castile and León” as well as with the king, and in the October treaty he recognized *de iure* Berenguela's royal lordship over Navarre.

The cynicism that had led to the treaty's renegotiation only a month and a half after it had first been settled proved well founded. The marriage never went through, and a year later, Berenguela was again trying to secure a marriage for Infante Alfonso—this one to Philippa of Ponthieu, sister of Fernando III's second wife, Juana. The two weddings were apparently negotiated at the same time, but Alfonso's never took place.¹⁴³ Although González speculates that Berenguela engaged in yet a third round of negotiations for Alfonso's hand, she did not live to see them succeed; the infante finally married only in 1249, more than two years after his grandmother's death.¹⁴⁴

“I Do Not Write to You Frequently”: Berenguela and Gregory IX

In fall 1236, Pope Gregory IX bestowed a special favor on Fernando III: he exempted the king from excommunication by anyone but the pope himself. Although Gregory spoke of rewarding Fernando's humility and devotion to

the Church, his generosity was more immediately inspired by the recent conquest of Córdoba.¹⁴⁵ But, in another indication of her central role in that conquest, he awarded the same spiritual privilege to Berenguela.

Much of the two letters' language is the same, although where Gregory speaks of Fernando's humility despite his elevation to the throne, he cites Berenguela's exemplary childrearing. Nevertheless, he declares his intention to favor her and grant her requests, just as he does for Fernando. Moreover, he addresses her as "queen of Castile and León"—titles that he had not always been willing to concede to her.¹⁴⁶ He used the same title in letters addressed to Berenguela a few months later, although in that case too he was more interested in her maternal role than her queenly one. Having told Fernando III to make peace with Thibault of Navarre, Gregory now wanted Berenguela to "warn and induce" her son to obey the papal order. The wording of his letter does not imply the formal authority that Gregory ascribed to Berenguela at other times. Rather, it puts her on a footing similar to that of Archbishop Rodrigo and Juan of Osma. In separate letters, Gregory IX had also instructed them to "warn and induce" the king to obey—the informal power of influence, not the prerogative of authority. And it was clear what Gregory perceived the source of Berenguela's influence to be. He advised Juan of Osma to "warn and induce the king of Castile and León diligently according to the wisdom that the Lord gave you"; Berenguela, by contrast, was told to "warn and induce the king, your son, diligently through maternal affection." Even so, the pope continued to address Berenguela in both letters as "the illustrious queen of Castile and León."¹⁴⁷ His use of the title, like his judgement that she deserved spiritual privileges equal to Fernando's, acknowledged the reality to which Thibault of Navarre had already attested. In the eyes of her contemporaries, both ecclesiastical and secular, Berenguela reigned in both Castile and León alongside her son.

The queen herself remained cautious about laying claim to the queenship of León, even while she continued to act as a sovereign. Late in 1240, the Leonese-Castilian monarchs grew concerned about Fernando III's son Fadrique's prospects of claiming his inheritance within the Holy Roman Empire, to which he had title through his mother, Beatriz. The abbot of Sahagún was sent to seek the pope's assistance on Fadrique's behalf, and Fernando III and Berenguela both wrote letters to accompany their envoy. Despite its self-effacing tone (a staple of secular rulers' missives to the pope), Berenguela's letter reveals broad authority and diplomatic skill. Modestly titling herself "Berenguela, by the grace of God queen of Castile and Toledo," she wrote:

For the manifold kindness, frequently offered without asking, that I and my son so often received from Your Holiness out of the great abundance of your goodness, I cannot even aspire to the act of thanks, considering what is due to you, when I behold your esteem toward me and mine. . . . But because at present I cannot do what I want to do—not because of any defect in my heart or any failing of human nature, but rather hoping for the approval of your will—in the meantime I thank your greatness, as much as I can, for so many kindnesses. . . . I do not believe that your benignity will refuse to respond to this, because the reason I do not write to you frequently arises not from lack of devotion but from the modesty that the feminine sex acquires from nature, and the reverence that is due to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. . . . But now I thank God, because I have the opportunity of relating, through the venerable and beloved W., abbot of Sahagún, a provident and discreet man . . . certain things that I did not want to entrust to letters.¹⁴⁸

The personal bond between Berenguela and Gregory IX was not as strong as the one she had had with Honorius III, a fact echoed in the fairly impersonal letters Gregory addressed to her. Yet she felt obliged to excuse her lack of correspondence with him (for which purpose she could resurrect the timeworn plea of feminine modesty)—intimating that he expected more attention from this powerful woman than he received. The intent of her letter is anything but modest. Berenguela portrayed herself and her son as equal beneficiaries of Gregory IX's kindness, another indication of their joint stature as rulers. Moreover, she was sending a proxy to ask Gregory IX to support Fadrique's inheritance claims—asking a significant favor and involving herself in European affairs considerably beyond the borders of her own kingdom. The letter that Fernando III sent by this same emissary also declined to commit any important details to writing, and promised that the abbot would personally discuss them with the pope instead.¹⁴⁹ This was a commonplace of medieval diplomacy; yet Berenguela's letter implies that she had given the abbot separate authority to speak for her, to be her ambassador as well as the king's. The separation of their roles, reflected in the separation of their letters, indicates that Berenguela was acting with independent sovereign authority, as Fernando III's partner rather than as his subordinate. But she was doing so in a matter of continental diplomacy, and therefore claimed a place on the European stage, not only on the Iberian one.

The Iberian Crusade and the Holy Land

Berenguela's last grand act as queen was also one of her most significant. Her decision to marry her daughter and namesake to the king of Jerusalem in 1224, though prompted chiefly by her Iberian ambitions, had linked her family to the rulers of the crusader states of the East. At a time when the Iberian crusade was thriving and the Christian Holy Land was struggling to survive, it was perhaps inevitable that those eastern relatives should ask for León-Castile's help.

In August 1246 the Latin Emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin II, came to Valladolid to seek military assistance, not from the monarchs themselves, but from the Order of Santiago. Baldwin II was Fernando III's nephew by marriage,¹⁵⁰ and he had been trying to get help from León-Castile for some time. The previous May, Fernando III's son Alfonso had issued a writ that allowed the Order of Santiago to send Baldwin assistance, per the pope's request; but he limited the number of knights of the Order who might leave to fifty and the total number of horses to one hundred.¹⁵¹ The Leonese-Castilian monarchs were reluctant to permit a substantial drain on the resources of the Order of Santiago, which supplied no small share of their own military strength. Fernando III was still actively campaigning; his son was now doing the same, and the two were already planning their assault on Seville, which would begin the following year.¹⁵² But the pope was insistently backing Baldwin II, and León-Castile was under heavy pressure to comply with the emperor's requests.

When Baldwin came to Iberia in August—accompanied by one of the pope's chaplains, which left no doubt of Innocent IV's investment in this affair—he and the master of Santiago had already hashed out a more satisfactory agreement than the one Infante Alfonso had offered.¹⁵³ The Order would provide Baldwin II a substantial military force, including 300 well-born knights, 100 of lower rank, 300 warhorses, and 1,000 foot soldiers, for two years. In return, Baldwin promised both cash and valuable eastern lands. Although the crown was not a party to their agreement, the Order needed royal approval to carry out its promises, as Infante Alfonso's writ demonstrated. For that reason, the negotiations and the sealing of the pact were overseen by Berenguela.

No other members of the royal family are said to have been present. Berenguela had taken responsibility for brokering this deal, and had summoned Baldwin II and the master of Santiago to her court at Valladolid for

the purpose—again, choosing to exercise independent authority from that town. In many ways, this act resembles others in which she had stood in for Fernando III during his absence on campaign; but it was not simply an instance of Berenguela managing the home fires. In overseeing this agreement, she had consented to a gift of men and *matériel* far beyond what Infante Alfonso had stipulated in May. Even González, normally an admirer of the queen's, had reservations about her judgement in this case; while conceding that Fernando III and Infante Alfonso must have authorized the agreement, he suspected that they were not pleased with it, considering their own pressing military needs.¹⁵⁴

In fact, though, Fernando III and Berenguela dealt with Baldwin II using the same tactics that had quelled the Haro-Castro rebellion ten years before. It was widely known that Baldwin II was insolvent. Indeed, he issued a writ while he was still in Valladolid, assuring the Order of Santiago that his magnates would fulfill the terms of the agreement.¹⁵⁵ There was already doubt that the emperor could deliver the land and money he had promised. So the Leonese-Castilian monarchs acted, but only to placate the pope. They expected Baldwin II's penury to put a quick end to the enterprise; failing that, they could claim that his pact with the Order was not fully valid because it had not received the king's express approval. Fernando III apparently never confirmed their agreement, as he often did for acts overseen by Berenguela in his absence. Moreover, he stayed carefully clear of Valladolid; the surviving diplomas show that he remained in Andalucía all summer.¹⁵⁶

As it happened, the king's confirmation was never required. In early 1247 the master of Santiago sent envoys to Lyon, France, to collect the money that Baldwin had promised them. But the money was not there, and the pope had to ask the master of Santiago to wait six more months, until Baldwin could find means to pay.¹⁵⁷ Baldwin apparently never did; by August 1247, the master of Santiago and his knights were with Fernando III at the siege of Seville.¹⁵⁸ The monarchs' assumption that Baldwin would not be able to fulfill the terms of his agreement, thus freeing the master of Santiago from fulfilling his, had proven correct. Berenguela and Fernando III had satisfied the pope's demands without conceding any of their military might.

Berenguela's supervision of the pact between Baldwin and the Order of Santiago also differed from her usual handling of judicial cases in the king's absence because this was not a domestic matter. Usually, when Berenguela is recorded in the role of royal arbiter, the cases concern Castilian and Leonese subjects. This difficult negotiation with a foreign ruler demonstrates that she

still exercised sovereign authority in external affairs. This is true even if her approval of the pact was not meant to hold up under scrutiny; in fact, if that was the case, it argues even more strongly for the trust that she shared with her son, and for foreigners' acceptance of her as a sovereign of León-Castile. Both Baldwin II and the pope's envoy understood the treaty to be valid with Berenguela's approval alone, and they never seem to have pressed the king for a confirmation.

Berenguela's recognition as reigning queen of León-Castile by popes, kings, and emperors confirms the documentary evidence from the unified kingdoms themselves. Regardless of her own demurrals about her proper title, she held formal authority in both León and Castile, and ruled there together with her son. Indeed, some of her most resonant acts—such as managing the royal court in Fernando III's absence and negotiating with foreign princes—date from this period. Her authority was recognized even more openly than before, as evidenced by changes in chancery style and by the chroniclers' ever-higher praise for her. As long as her mental and physical health held out—and she remained vigorous even into her fifties and sixties—Fernando III welcomed her assistance and advice. Their partnership grew along with their kingdom. Together, they forged two fiercely divided realms into a single united one, and did it well enough to keep León-Castile from ever being sundered again.

Berenguela's long investment in her personal domain in the Tierra de Campos had made it possible for her to acquire first the crown of Castile and then the crown of León. Yet in uniting the two kingdoms, she had destroyed much of the strategic value of her border properties. While this could have weakened her position after 1230, it never did, and the reasons for that are due to precedents that she herself set. First, the vanished border retained its significance even after the union of Castile and León; the dominion that Berenguela had built for herself there became a reliable base from which she and her son could manage both kingdoms' affairs. The court's oscillations along the old border zone in the early 1230s attest to that; and even after the initial hurdles of union had been cleared, Fernando III's court spent far more time in Burgos and in the Tierra de Campos than anywhere else in old Castile or León. Second, Berenguela had become such an essential part of his reign by 1230 that Fernando III voluntarily conceded authority to her in León, even though she had no legitimate claim to it. Once again, mother and son gave each other a kingdom, and ruled it according to the long-established patterns of their extraordinary collaboration.

Fernando III's legacy rests largely on his military successes. But the enormous territorial gains that León-Castile achieved under his rule would have been impossible if the kingdoms' security and prosperity had been at risk from his absences. Without Berenguela, Fernando III could not have achieved so much, and the history of western Spain would have unfolded very differently. Berenguela deserves to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with her son in the pantheon of history, not merely a mother, but also a queen.

Conclusions

While King don Fernando was in Alcalá . . . news reached him there that made him grieve greatly: that the noble queen doña Berenguela, his mother, was dead. When the king heard the news, he was deeply troubled and brokenhearted by his great grief; yet the strength of his spirit caused him to endure and disguise his grief. And it was no wonder that he grieved so greatly because of this, for he had lost a mother so attentive to all his affairs that no king of his day had ever lost another like her. She was the mirror of Castile and of León and of all Spain; many kingdoms were guided by her counsel and intelligence, and she surpassed and was far greater than any other queens of her time who held a kingdom. She was mourned throughout Castile by the town councils and by all people of every faith; she was especially mourned by poor knights, for whom she did many good works. She was a wholly attentive servant and friend to God. The fame of her virtues, and of her good works and her nobility, spread throughout the whole world, for she was an example of all goodness. May God have grace and mercy on her, who was his true servant and friend, and make her heir to his kingdom with his faithful; amen.¹

The necrology of Las Huelgas gives November 8, 1246, as the date of Berenguela's death.² By that time the queen had not seen her son for over a year. Since 1244 he had spent nearly all his time in Andalucía, prosecuting his wars and consolidating his gains, while Berenguela attended to matters in the north. In 1245, though, Berenguela had sent a message to the king at Córdoba, telling him that she was traveling south from Toledo and asking him to meet with her. "And the king was greatly pleased when he heard this, and he then left that place [Córdoba], and brought the queen his wife with

him, and passed through the mountains and came to a place called Pozuelo . . . and they had their meeting there.”³ This was not purely a social call; Berenguela was trying to resolve the land dispute between Queen Juana and the heir-apparent, Infante Alfonso.⁴ But the PCG remembers it primarily as their last face-to-face encounter:

this mother and son, who greatly loved each other, never saw each other again. And they stayed there [at Pozuelo] six weeks, taking great pleasure in each other’s company; and then they left each other forever, for she never again saw her son, nor did he ever again see his mother, nor did he ever again pass through the mountains to go to Castile. And Queen doña Berenguela returned to Toledo, and the noble King don Fernando returned to the frontier with his wife.⁵

Here Fernando III’s farewell to Berenguela becomes, in a sense, his farewell to the Leonese-Castilian heartland. He never did leave Andalucía again, constrained by the urgent need for military force and governance on the new frontier. Yet although Berenguela’s own travel grew increasingly limited in her later years—from about 1236 on it becomes rare to find her anywhere other than Burgos, Valladolid, or Toledo—she seems to have remained as spry as a sixty-year-old woman of the mid-thirteenth century could expect to be. The PCG implies that her death was sudden enough to prevent word of her illness being sent to Fernando III. And at the end of September 1246, Juan of Osma had named her an executor of his own will, indicating that he still considered her well enough to carry out that duty only a little over a month before she died.⁶

She had, in any case, outlived most of her contemporaries. Of her siblings, only her sister Blanche survived her.⁷ And, at age sixty-six, she had outlived nearly all the men whose loyalty had shaped and sustained her career. Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón, Lope Díaz de Haro, Álvaro Pérez de Castro, and Bishop Mauricio of Burgos had all passed on in the late 1230s. In 1242 Berenguela had lost García Fernández de Villamayor, her majordomo.⁸ And only a few months before Juan of Osma died in Palencia, that see had been left vacant by its own bishop, Tello Téllez de Meneses.⁹ A few of Berenguela’s magnates and prelates did survive her—Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón was one, and so were Archbishop Rodrigo and Lucas of Tuy. But by 1250, age, illness, or accident had claimed them too.¹⁰ Even her son would be gone by 1252, bringing a foundational era in Leonese-Castilian history to a close.

I have argued that Fernando III and Berenguela shared royal authority in León-Castile, and that they depended on each other heavily in their later years, much as they had at the beginning. With Fernando so often occupied in the conquest and defense of Andalucía, Berenguela's authority was acutely needed in the quotidian affairs of the heartland. What happened, then, during the six years after their partnership ended—when Berenguela had died, and Fernando ruled the two kingdoms without her?

Certainly, the loss of one queen (even an inheriting queen) did not cripple León-Castile's plural monarchy. Fernando III marked one of the most significant accomplishments of his reign with the conquest of Seville in 1248, even without his mother to serve as lieutenant and quartermaster-general. His success did not wholly depend on her support. But the PCG suggests that, apart from his personal grief, Fernando III knew that his mother's death had cost the kingdom something:

and he judged in his heart that it was past time for him to come to Castile, for he knew that he would find many misdeeds and many complaints there; and that if he went there, it would be appropriate for him to stop and remain there as long as would be necessary for him to set things right. For he had lost his mother's help, which formerly had excused him from such tasks and from many other things in every place she went. And if he went there, and left the frontier, where he had the Moors broken and under pressure, in the interim . . . they would gain such strength that perhaps it would later be very difficult for him to return them to the condition in which he had them now. And so, as the king was in Córdoba weighing all of this, understanding that it was better for him to stay where he was than to go to Castile . . . he left there and went to Jaén.¹¹

In this passage, Fernando decides that his own talents are best used in advancing and securing the frontier. At the same time, though, he recognizes that this will mean neglecting the injustices being committed in Castile—a responsibility from which he had previously been “excused” by “his mother's help.” The PCG's narrative supports the documentary evidence that Berenguela exercised regalian authority in León and Castile in Fernando III's absence. And it also suggests that even though it was “past time” for someone to deal with the problems that had arisen in Berenguela's absence, Fernando III had no ready replacement for her. There were other people he trusted; his brother Alfonso de Molina and his eldest son, the future Alfonso X, had both

taken a leading role in the king's military campaigns during the last several years. But although Alfonso de Molina had also governed alongside Berenguela in Fernando's absence, the PCG does not suggest that Fernando was prepared to send him north now—perhaps because his military prowess was needed in Andalucía.

Our view of the last six years of Fernando III's reign is, unfortunately, obscured by the silence of the narrative sources. Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, Lucas of Tuy, and Juan of Osma had all ceased writing long before. The PCG goes some way toward filling the gap, but even apart from its textual flaws, its focus in this period is on Castilian victories in Andalucía; like its protagonist, it has little attention to spare for the rest of the kingdom. And, both because Fernando III spent the rest of his life in Andalucía and because his diplomas' preoccupation with that region reflects the enormous task of integrating Andalucía into León-Castile proper, it is difficult to gain any clear view of how royal governance functioned in the north while the king was elsewhere. Among his fairly sparse diplomas for this era, we have no diplomatic attestations of grief for his mother such as are found in Alfonso VIII and Leonor's privileges to Las Huelgas after the death of their son Fernando. This is not to say that she was forgotten; early in his own reign, Alfonso X made offerings to Las Huelgas for the souls of his great-grandparents, his grandmother, and his mother.¹² He also requested, and received, a papal privilege granting remission of sins to any pilgrim who visited Las Huelgas on the anniversaries of the deaths of "the kings and queens of Castile and León" who were buried there.¹³ And Berenguela is fondly remembered in Alfonso X's *Cantigas* as a pious mother beloved by God.

The PCG's own epitaph for the queen, written at a vantage from which her whole life could be surveyed, attests to Berenguela's contemporary significance. Its tone is deferential, which is no surprise; the CLRC, CM, and DRH all strike the same note, and they also extol Berenguela's piety, charity, and attention to royal business.¹⁴ But the PCG speaks of a worldwide fame. Berenguela, it claims, was a model not only for her own realms but for "all Spain," and she ruled or influenced the rule of "many kingdoms." She excelled all the other queens of her day—an assertion that puts Alfonso X's own mother, Beatriz, firmly in her shadow, just as it dismisses the competing claims of Blanche of Castile. Those who grieved for her, says the PCG, included Muslims and Jews as well as Christians, and her reputation "spread throughout the whole world." Berenguela's virtues are here proclaimed on a stage much larger than that of León-Castile.

From what we know about Berenguela's life, the chronicle's accolades were not excessive. Berenguela communicated with, negotiated with, and advised other rulers across Europe, including a succession of popes, the queen of France, and the Latin Emperor of Constantinople. Her contemporaries were certainly aware of her status and authority, and aware that it substantially surpassed that of most royal women of her day. Chroniclers and subjects, nobles and prelates alike saw her as she saw herself—an inheriting queen, a reigning monarch, who shared authority with her son but did not surrender it to him. The details of Berenguela's act at Valladolid in 1217, when she bestowed the kingdom of Castile upon Fernando III, were deliberately obscured by royal chroniclers who sought to emphasize the king's legitimacy and minimize the dangerous implication that a woman held the throne. Yet even in 1217, and throughout the years thereafter, the narrative and documentary sources clearly acknowledge that Berenguela acted—in conjunction with Fernando III—as a reigning monarch. She exercised regalian prerogatives and held an authority that was qualitatively different even from the considerable power enjoyed by Castilian and Leonese queens-consort. Her case therefore requires a reconsideration of the structure, and the gendering, of medieval monarchy.

In western Iberia, monarchy was not singular. A reigning monarch was frequently associated with other figures who shared in the crown's authority—heirs, spouses, and even parents.¹⁵ These figures could be either male or female, and so (in theory) could the reigning monarch. Hereditary right to the throne was technically enough to allow a man or woman to assume the central position in this plural monarchy. However, hereditary right was not an absolute; it was contested and negotiated, and ultimately it had to be the product of consensus. Gendered considerations affected that consensus. A female heir, for example, was likely to become a reigning monarch only if she were closely associated with a man who shared her authority—a husband or, as in Berenguela's case, a son. Yet the exclusion of women who had no men beside them was not automatic. Although the Castilian royal chroniclers insist otherwise, Fernando III's accession in León was not a foregone conclusion. His half-sisters, Sancha and Dulce, had substantial support in the kingdom despite being unmarried and childless. What tipped the scales in Fernando's favor—after a considerable period of doubt—was not his masculinity but his mother's lordship. Her affective bonds with nobles, clergy, and towns along the Leonese-Castilian border were key to building the consensus he needed in order to be recognized as king.

The same consensus-building strategy is evident in every case of contested royal authority from this period—Berenguela's recognition as heir at the Curia of Carrión, Fernando's acknowledgment at the "Cortes" of Benavente and León, their joint accession to Castile in 1217, and even Álvaro Núñez de Lara's bid to take the regency from Berenguela in 1215. Since this was precisely the era when the town councils of western Iberia were coming to prominence, we can see them alongside prelates and nobles as the targets of rival monarchs' attempts to win support.¹⁶ Although proper acclamation of a new monarch required some kind of public assembly, the assemblies themselves were not opportunities to negotiate the makeup of the monarchy. They existed to demonstrate personal loyalty and to create, through homage, the reciprocal ties of lordship between the monarch and his or her subjects.¹⁷ Negotiation happened previously, and privately; it was, indeed, the work of a lifetime.

Where those lordly ties already existed, of course, the monarch's task was much simpler. This is a major reason why the ability to dispense patronage was vital to Berenguela's success. Gifts given "from the queen's hand"—particularly tenancies, for which homage to the patron was a prerequisite—created affective bonds between her and prominent magnates in Castile and León. Although those bonds did not withstand Álvaro Núñez's testing in 1215, they remained strong enough to bring Berenguela's clients back to her side two years later. After that, her "magnates of the Tierra de Campos" (plus the Haro family) made up her inner circle for the rest of her life. Documentary sources and chronicles show them beside her at critical moments throughout her reign and demonstrate that their influence, both lordly and military, was essential to realizing Berenguela's claims to authority. And the sources' continual association of Berenguela with the Girón, Meneses, Haro, and Villamayor (including her association with them before 1217) shows that her patronage of them was indeed hers;¹⁸ she chose her own clients, and received their personal loyalty in return. This is an important distinction, since in the medieval era what appears to be queenly patronage might only be an extension of the king's patronage by other means.¹⁹

Berenguela's personal lordship over her arras properties and other areas let her secure the loyalty of important clients, including prelates and town councils. Her hereditary claim to the Castilian throne made it possible to parlay that loyalty into sovereign authority. Beyond that, she depended on the traditions of Castile's (and later León's) plural monarchy to legitimize Fernando's kingship while continuing to exercise her rights as queen. From

an institutional perspective, her career encourages us to question assumptions about the gender, and the singularity, of medieval monarchy. In early thirteenth-century Castile and León, *both* Berenguela *and* Fernando III reigned. And they did it in collaboration not only with each other but with a host of other family members, whose status as non-inheriting or pre-inheriting monarchs made them lesser but still significant stars in the royal constellation. While plural monarchy allowed more men, as well as more women, to participate in royal authority, it held particular promise in regions where women could inherit the throne. If we take Berenguela and Fernando III as a successful example of joint sovereignty, rather than accepting Fernando as a reigning monarch and dismissing Berenguela as an abdicating queen-mother, then their relevance to earlier and later Iberian history becomes obvious.

Regardless of her legal rights, it was very difficult for a woman to reign in western Iberia without a man ruling beside her. Queen Urraca attained her throne in 1109 only by marrying Alfons I of Aragón; when the marriage failed, she had to contend with strong noble and ecclesiastical support for her son, the future Alfonso VII. Ultimately she had to incorporate Alfonso VII into her monarchy, not as a dominant figure but certainly as a coruler with more authority than most presumptive heirs could claim. The other reigning queen of late-medieval Castile, Isabel I, faced the same obstacles. Her succession, and the military victory that made it possible, occurred only in the context of her marriage to Fernando II of Aragón. In the ensuing debate over how exactly a plural monarchy should work when it includes a reigning queen, Isabel's court chronicler depicts her citing both Urraca and Berenguela (the latter with no mention of her famous son) as proof that women could inherit and rule Castile.²⁰ Even so, Isabel's famous compromise determined that she and her husband would share authority equally in both their kingdoms. Clearly, Berenguela was—and was understood to be, even in the Middle Ages—part of a much longer practice that permitted women to inherit, provided that they ruled together with a powerful male associate.

However, these arrangements were not unique to León and Castile. Although western Iberia was a region where customs like partible inheritance and cognatic kinship endured longer than elsewhere, creating a legal and social environment more amenable to women's power, it was not a hothouse for strange forms of monarchy that grew nowhere else. Plural monarchy certainly existed in eastern Iberia, where women could not inherit the throne, although it took a different form.²¹ And various iterations of shared authority

are coming to light among the nobility of Western Europe, especially of France, in the later Middle Ages.²² Where historians used to argue that medieval women could exercise no authority beyond the household—and that women who plainly did so were aberrations²³—we now recognize that the gender roles of elite women were far more complex, and that their capacities as lords were far more extensive, than previously assumed. Our assessment of noble women's authority is being revised for all areas of Western Europe. It may be time to take a closer look at their royal counterparts as well.

Of course, even a tradition of plural monarchy does not make Berenguela "typical" of anything. She was an anomaly in the thirteenth century because she was an inheriting monarch who was also a woman. The backing of her noble and episcopal clients helped her overcome this perceived handicap, but did not erase it entirely. Berenguela tried to appease gender expectations; her chroniclers claimed that many of her authoritative acts were driven by modesty, piety, concern for the poor, and other feminine virtues. In doing this, they echoed her own claim to feminine modesty in her letter to Gregory IX and her refusal to call herself queen of León after 1230, even though her contemporaries did not hesitate to use the title.²⁴ They also recall strategies that other powerful women, including Isabel I, would use: a discourse of feminine submission and humility meant to counteract anxieties about a woman's obvious authority over men.²⁵ That discourse exists alongside, and complicates, medieval discourse about exceptional women's virility. While women certainly were represented, and represented themselves, as going "beyond their sex" to achieve masculine authority and virtue, they could also rely on a model of definitively feminine virtue to affirm patriarchal order and make their power seem less threatening.

Femininity was Berenguela's weapon of choice. Apart from Lucas of Tuy's metaphor of the queen as Fernando III's disciplinarian schoolmaster, the court chroniclers avoid praising her for virility, even though her career of lordship, warfare, and authoritative rule seems to invite such praise. Instead, they emphasize traits associated with virtuous women. They even take care to display Berenguela in appropriately feminine roles—attending to the burial of the royal dead, for example, or interceding with the king on behalf of his penitent nobles. Most of all, they seek to portray her collaboration with Fernando III in the least threatening terms possible: as a mother doing all she could to help and support her son. Her attempts to mitigate and deny her own authority are a reminder that she operated within a male-dominated

world, one where women's power was more acceptable the more narrowly it was defined. In other words, she accepted the "patriarchal bargains" that offered women a chance at agency in medieval society.²⁶

She succeeded perhaps too well in these efforts. The delicate partnership she had created with Fernando III, which was designed to obscure her authority a little, wound up obscuring it entirely. Particularly in periods when only the most extraordinary women were deemed capable of rule, it was easy to overlook Berenguela's contributions to the storied reign of her son. She has therefore faded in historical memory, leaving a gap in our understanding of the medieval past that, I hope, this study will help to fill. For Fernando III and Berenguela ruled together, and the accomplishments of one do not diminish—indeed, might have been impossible without—the success of the other.

Although none of Berenguela's client-chroniclers eulogized her in their histories after her death, Archbishop Rodrigo took a moment near the very end of the DRH to praise her while she lived:

For this noble queen preserved and even increased the gifts of grace that she had received, with such dedication that all ages, all sexes, all ranks, all faiths, all peoples, all tongues knew her good qualities from experiencing them. Without diminishing her virtues at all, she shares the works of her mercy with everyone. She is a farsighted manager of the works of her forebears, but she is far more careless of the kingdom and its wealth than of her virtue. She is deservedly admired in our times, for neither our age nor that of our fathers ever saw her equal. Let us pray God that he deign to give her a long life and grant her prosperity and that she abound in good works, until she returns her happy soul to her Redeemer.²⁷

Neither our age nor that of our fathers ever saw her equal. History almost bears out the archbishop's hyperbole. There were very few queens like Berenguela. There were not many kings like her either. She deserves to be reinstated to the place she earned in the pantheon of medieval monarchs, for the history of Iberia, of Europe, and of the Middle Ages was as much the work of women's hands as men's.

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Abbreviations

<i>Alfonso VIII</i>	Julio González, <i>El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII</i> , 3 vols. Madrid, 1960.
<i>Alfonso IX</i>	Julio González, <i>Alfonso IX</i> , 2 vols. Madrid, 1944.
AC	Archivo de la Catedral de
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuation Medievalis
CD	<i>Colección documental</i> (or <i>diplomática</i>) de
CLRC	<i>Chronica latina regum Castellae</i> , ed. Luis Charlo Brea, in <i>Chronica Hispana Saeculi XIII</i> , ed. Luis Charlo Brea, Juan Estévez Sola, and Rocío Carande Herrero, CCCM 73. Turnhout, 1997.
CM	Lucas of Tuy, <i>Chronicon mundi</i> , ed. Emma Falque, CCCM 74. Turnhout, 2003.
DM	<i>Documentos</i> (or <i>Documentación</i>) del monasterio de
DRH	Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, <i>Historia de rebus Hispanie</i> , ed. Juan Fernández Valverde, CCCM 72. Turnhout, 1987.
<i>Fernando III</i>	Julio González, <i>Reinado y diplomas de Fernando III</i> , 3 vols. Córdoba, 1980–1986.
<i>Gregorio IX</i>	<i>La documentación pontificia de Gregorio IX (1227–1241)</i> , ed. Eli-seo Sáinz Ripa, 2 vols. Rome, 2001.
<i>Honorio III</i>	<i>La documentación pontificia de Honorio III (1216–1227)</i> , ed. De-metrio Mansilla. Rome, 1965.
<i>Inocencio III</i>	<i>La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III (965–1216)</i> , ed. Demetrio Mansilla. Rome, 1955.
OO.MM.	Órdenes Militares
PCG	Alfonso X et al., <i>Primera crónica general de España</i> , vol. 2, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal et al. Madrid, 1955.

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See, e.g., Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile*; Rodríguez López, “Sucesión regia”; G. Martin, “Régner sans régner”; Raizman, “Prayer, Patronage, and Piety”; D’Emilio, “Royal Convent.”

2. See, e.g., Silleras-Fernandez, *Power, Piety, and Patronage*, 4; T. Martin, *Queen as King*, 12; Lehfeltdt, 33 n.6.

3. See Bennett, 23–24; Smith, *The Gender of History*, 186–87.

4. See Karras, 85–88.

5. Earenfight, *King’s Other Body*, 12–13; Shadis, *Berenguela*, 14, 34–35.

6. Earenfight, *King’s Other Body*, 3–4.

7. Murray, 2–3, 7–9; Nicholas, 74–77.

8. Bennett, 59; Weissberger, xvi.

9. Shadis, *Berenguela*, 3, 10, 50.

10. Jordan argues effectively for looking beyond the biological role of heiresses to evaluate their power (154).

11. My use of the term *lordship* follows Thomas Bisson’s; it refers both to “personal command over dependent people,” whether peasants or lesser lords, and to “the value or extent of such dependencies,” including but not limited to physical space. See Bisson, *Crisis*, 3; also Van Engen, 215–18.

12. Earenfight, “Preface,” xviii–xix.

13. *Ibid.*, xiii.

14. See, e.g., Collins, 80; Earenfight, “Absent Kings.”

15. I use the word *crusade* here in its technical sense of a war, usually but not always against Muslims, in which the pope granted specific spiritual benefits to those who participated. In this sense, the southern campaigns in Iberia—the Reconquista—in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were crusades. See O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, especially 19–22; Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*; Linehan, *Spanish Church*.

16. See Earenfight, “Preface,” xiv.

17. Constance Bouchard argues that in France the agnatic mentality prevailed much earlier, and the gradual restoration of public order in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries simply made it more possible for families to transmit patrimony from father to eldest son (see Bouchard, *Those of My Blood*). Still, this chronology does not translate to Iberia.

18. Barton, *Aristocracy*, 39–44; Dillard, 76–77.
19. Again, in León and Castile, this practice continued until the fourteenth century: Barton, *Aristocracy*, 53–55. See also Dillard, 46.
20. See Adair, 63–64.
21. Shadis, *Berenguela*, 14, 34–35; Earenfight, *King's Other Body*, 12–13, 135–36. See also Cheyette, 25.
22. See Shadis, *Berenguela*, 34–35, 41.
23. Earenfight, "Preface," xvi–xvii.
24. See Huneycutt, "*Alianora regina anglorum*," 128; Tanner, 141.
25. Heiresses were not always able to make good on that possibility, of course. See T. Martin, *Queen as King*, 61 n.92.
26. The preeminent study of Urraca's reign is Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla*; it now has a valuable companion in T. Martin, *Queen as King*. See also Gómez Mampaso, 129.
27. This example is from *Alfonso VIII*, #528, 2:923–25 (Dec. 30, 1189), but the formula is typical of both Castilian and Leonese royal diplomas in this period.
28. For example, Alfonso VII's sister Sancha often co-issued his diplomas: see García Calles, *Doña Sancha*. Fernando III's brother Alfonso co-issued in the early years of the reign, while he was the king's heir. On the other hand, Alfonso IX's half-brother, Sancho Fernández, appears never to have co-issued his diplomas; see Chapter 6.
29. Shadis, *Berenguela*, 35.
30. Silleras-Fernandez, "Money Isn't Everything," 81–82.
31. Earenfight, *King's Other Body*, 2.
32. See Silleras-Fernandez, "Money Isn't Everything," and *Power, Piety, and Patronage*.
33. In English, lordship presents a problem for scholars of women's history. The word *lord* is inescapably gendered, but it has no feminine equivalent; *lady* has acquired connotations of reserve and gentility that do not correspond to the lived realities of many medieval "ladies." Therefore, I use *lord* and *lordship* in a gender-neutral sense wherever possible. When speaking specifically of women in their capacity as lords, I use the Latin word *domina*, "(female) lord," the grammatical equivalent of *dominus*. While not a perfect solution, *domina* has the advantage of conveying the necessary authority while evading any romantic connotations.
34. Bisson, *Crisis*, 493–96.
35. Ruiz, 112–18.
36. Estepa Díez, "Curia y cortes," 56–57.
37. Reilly, "The Court Bishops of Alfonso VII," 67–78; Barton, *Aristocracy*, 44, 128–30, 135; Bisson, *Crisis*, 98–99; Estepa Díez, "Curia y Cortes," 77.
38. Estepa Díez, "Curia y Cortes," 56–57.
39. See Estepa Díez, "Frontera," 47.
40. The majordomo was the royal steward, responsible for managing the royal household and demesne. The alférez was the royal standardbearer, who commanded the

king's *mesnada*, or personal household guard; carried the king's banner in battle; and commanded the army when the king was absent. The merino mayor, or chief bailiff, was the apex of the crown's judicial administration. He oversaw regional merinos, who were responsible for royal justice within their own towns or districts and had military and financial responsibilities, such as ensuring the defense of their jurisdiction and collecting royal rents there. While the offices of majordomo and *alférez* were held by great magnates, the merino mayor was a member of the lesser nobility. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:239–47; *Fernando III*, 1:118–20, 481; Barton, *Aristocracy*, 142; Pérez-Bustamante, 65, 67, 97–100, 164, 171, 185, 200; Jular Pérez-Alfaro, *Los adelantados*.

41. Doubleday, 13. Royal tenancies had a complex relationship with the individual lordships known as *bebetrias*; see Estepa Díez, *Las bebetrias castellanas*.

42. Pérez-Bustamante, 50–51; Estepa Díez, *Estructura social*, 443; Doubleday, 13–14, 45, 51; Martínez Sopena, 522. The nature of these incomes varied widely; see Jular Pérez-Alfaro, “*Alfoz y tierra*,” 36–39.

43. Jular Pérez-Alfaro, “*Alfoz y tierra*,” 41.

44. A charter is any medieval document that records a legal act. For the sake of clarity, I use *diploma* to refer to documents issued by a monarch, and *charter* to refer to those issued by anyone else, although in fact the categories often overlap. I also consider the term “individual” charter preferable to the more frequently used “private” charter, given that “public” and “private” are problematic concepts for medieval history.

45. “Facta carta ista in palencia, Idus Octobris. Sub ERA M. ccLV. Regnante Rege, Ferrando, cum Regina Berengaria, matre sua, in Toletto, et Castella. Tellio existente Episcopo in palencia. Dompno Lupo didaci Alfíerez regis. Dompno Gundissaluo roderici maiordomo regis. Gondissaluo petri de Arnellas, merino maiore. Gondissaluo petri merino in palencia”: AHN, Clero, 1692/10 (Oct. 15, 1217).

46. “Facta carta sub era M. CC. LX, mense aprilis, regnante rege aldeffonso in leg[ionis] et in Gallecia, asturiis, et strematura. Petro munionis compostellane sedis existente archiepiscopo. In legione, roderico aluari, in astorica, Petro Andree, in Çemora, martino roderico ii. Fernando Fernandi maio[rdomo] regis ipso tenente Çemoram et beneuentum. Regis signiffero aluaro petri”: *ibid.*, 3551/11 (April 1222).

47. For an example of this methodology as it applies to the early twelfth century, see Estepa Díez, “*Frontera*,” 17–20.

48. According to Grassotti, the phrase itself implies that the recipient had done homage to the queen: *Instituciones*, 1:178–79.

49. Cf. *Fernando III*, 1:122–23.

50. Barton, *Aristocracy*, 53.

51. Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile*, 34.

52. As Eleanor of Aquitaine was: *ibid.*, 4.

53. Stafford, “*Portrayal*,” 144, 148, 157; Huneycutt, “*Female Succession*,” 189–90; Ferrante, 11. Cf. Poulet, 94–95.

54. One exception occurs among French troubadours who, in mocking the dominance of Blanche of Castile over their own king, Blanche's son Louis IX, cast similar

aspersions on Blanche's sister Berenguela and her relationship with Fernando III. See Shadis, *Berenguela*, 17–18.

55. CM, Praef. 2, 10; cf. *ibid.*, Praef. 1, 4.

56. Falque, vii–ix; *Alfonso VIII*, 1:12; Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 357–58; Rodríguez López, “History and topography,” 9.

57. See Stafford, “Portrayal,” 167.

58. AHN, cód. 996, f. 23r (Sep. 23, 1208); *Alfonso VIII*, #828, 3:451–53 (Dec. 12, 1208); *ibid.*, #834, 3:462–63 (Jan. 5, 1209).

59. Fernández Valverde, xxxi; Linehan, *History and the Historians*, throughout and 350–51.

60. For the long-running battles over the primacy and their consequences, see Linehan, *History and the Historians*.

61. Charlo Brea, 23–24.

62. Ciot, “Une Chronique latine inédite.”

63. Lomax, 205–11; cf. Charlo Brea, 11–18. O’Callaghan notes the possibility that a different author either wrote or revised the final section of the chronicle, which deals with the conquest of Córdoba: “Introduction,” xxxvii.

64. See Linehan, “Don Juan de Soria,” 375–93; Nieto Soria, 31–66; G. Martin, “Régner sans régner.”

65. O’Callaghan, “Introduction,” xxxiii; Reilly, “Bishop Lucas,” 785–86.

66. Charlo Brea, 13, 21; cf. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:12.

67. O’Callaghan, “Introduction,” xxx; Charlo Brea, 18–20; Falque, xviii–xxi; Reilly, “Bishop Lucas,” 768, 771; Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 350; DRH 9.18, 301.

68. Ward, 147–62.

CHAPTER I. INFANTA AND HEIR, 1180–1197

1. “Leonor” is the Castilian name of Eleanor Plantagenet, a daughter of Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine. She had married Alfonso VIII in 1170, when she was nine or ten and he was about fourteen.

2. “Facta carta . . . tercia die postquam natus est Burgis rex Sancius filius sepedicti Aldefonsi illustris regis Castelle”: *Alfonso VIII*, #364, 2:627 (Apr. 7, 1181).

3. *Ibid.*, #367, 2:633–35 (May 1, 1181). Since this is a diploma issued by Alfonso VIII to reward doña Estefanía, who “nursed (*nutriuit*) my daughter, Queen Berenguela,” Berenguela had apparently already been weaned. Moreover, since the diploma again announces that Sancho had been born twenty-eight days before, Berenguela had to be close to twelve months old. See Shadis, *Berenguela*, 34.

4. He last appears in his father's diplomas on July 13, 1181: *Alfonso VIII*, #372, 2:642–45.

5. “Plange, Castilla misera, / plange pro rege Sancio, / . . . / Casum tuum considera / patrem plangens in filio”: *ibid.*, 1:202. For the identification of this Sancho with Alfonso VIII's son, see *ibid.*, 1:202 n.208.

6. “una cum uxore mea Alienor regina, et cum filia mea infantissa Berengaria”: *ibid.*, #373, 2:645 (Jul. 31, 1181).

7. *Libro de privilegios de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén*, ed. Ayala Martínez, #134, 309–11 (May 20, 1181).

8. See García Calles, especially 106–7.

9. AHN, Clero, 977/14 (Nov. 13, 1181).

10. Cf., e.g., “ego rex Sancius, Dei misericordia domni Adefonsi imperatoris filius, cum eius consensu et uoluntate” (*Alfonso VIII*, #11, 2:24 (Jul. 23, 1153)); “Ego rex donnus fernandus una cum filio meo rege domno adefonso” (AHN, Clero, 992/17 (Apr. 2, 1183)). In the charter she co-issued before Sancho’s death, Berenguela is titled merely “infantissa”: *Libro de privilegios de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén*, ed. Ayala Martínez, #134, 310 (May 20, 1181).

11. The men who confirm these charters include major court figures such as Alfonso VIII’s majordomo, *alférez*, and *merino mayor*, indicating that the court itself was present: AHN, Clero, 868/3 (Sep. 13, 1185); *ibid.*, 978/1 (Mar. 4, 1186); *ibid.*, 978/6 (Nov. 25, 1187).

12. *Alfonso VIII*, #386, 2:669–70 (Mar. 30, 1182); AHN, Clero, 977/20 (Feb. 3, 1184).

13. *Alfonso VIII*, #386, 2:669–70 (Talavera, Mar. 28, 1182); *ibid.*, #390, 2:674–76 (Toledo, May 12, 1182); AHN, Clero, 1737/3 (Urueña, Jan. 26, 1183); *ibid.*, 977/20 (Burgos, Feb. 3, 1184); *ibid.*, 868/4 (Tordehumos, Oct. 18, 1185); *Alfonso VIII*, #472, 2:808–12 (Burgos, Jun. 1, 1187).

14. Of the 102 surviving diplomas that Alfonso VIII issued without Berenguela and in a specified location between 1182 and 1187, 18 were issued in Toledo and 25 in Burgos. In other words, 42 percent of the extant diplomas were issued in one of these two cities. That proportion does not include the numerous diplomas issued at nearby sites like Talavera and San Esteban de Gormaz.

15. On the foundation of Las Huelgas, see Shadis, *Berenguela*, 39–40; Nolan, 387–89; and D’Emilio, “Royal Convent.”

16. “ad preces uenerabilis infantis et Abbatisse et conuentus”: *El Real Monasterio de las Huelgas de Burgos*, ed. Rodríguez López, #4, 330 (1187). Rodríguez identifies this infanta as Berenguela (329).

17. Royal women who had taken vows at Las Huelgas were, of course, considerably more active in its charters; this is especially true of Berenguela’s sister Constanza, who became abbess, and Berenguela’s daughter, also named Constanza. For example, both women acted in a charter made at Las Huelgas in April 1233: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1231–1262)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #274, 38.

18. *Alfonso VIII*, #472, 2:808–12 (Jun. 1, 1187).

19. Cf. LoPrete, “Adela of Blois: Familial Alliances and Female Lordship,” 15; see also Torres Sevilla-Quinones de León, 434–39.

20. Canonically speaking, Alfonso IX was the late king’s illegitimate son, because his parents were related in the sixth degree of consanguinity (they had shared a common ancestor six generations before). Fernando II’s marriage to Urraca López de Haro had suffered from no such impediment, which made Sancho Fernández the only legitimate heir to León: *Alfonso IX*, 1:17–18, 24–25, 36, 39, 44.

21. Ibid., 1:10.
22. See García Calles, *Doña Sancha*.
23. Cf. Martínez Sopena, 503.
24. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:73.
25. Martínez Sopena, 15.
26. *Alfonso VIII*, #407, 2:701–8 (Jun. 1, 1183).
27. CLRC 28, 68; DRH 7.33, 255.
28. *CD Catedral de Oviedo*, ed. García Larragueta, #209, 500 (Jan. 14, 1188); AHN, Clero, 1618/3 (Feb. 14, 1188); *Alfonso IX*, #3, 2:10 (Apr. 29, 1188).
29. AHN, Sellos, 3/7 (Sep. 29, 1188).
30. *Alfonso IX*, #5, 2:12–14 (May 4, 1188).
31. Ibid., #20, 2:38 (Mar. 6, 1188).
32. See Rassow, *Der Prinzgemahl*.
33. “cum consensu filie mee Berengarie”; “cum consensu eiusdem filii mei Cvonr-radi”: *Alfonso VIII*, #499, 2:858–59 (Apr. 23, 1188).
34. Ibid., 2:859–60 (Apr. 23, 1188).
35. “cum consilio uxoris sue Berengarie, et aliter non liceat ei”: ibid., 2:860–61 (Apr. 23, 1188).
36. “et detur uxori eius regnum et ipsi cum ea, et Conrado non detur sine uxore sua Berengaria, ipsa presente et iubente, non aliter”: ibid., 2:861 (Apr. 23, 1188).
37. “Item, si mortuo rege sine filio legitimo masculo uxor Conradi, Berengaria, filia regis, forsan infirma accedere non poterit ad Castellam, ueniat Conradus et adducat prolem suam et uxoris sue, si quam habuerit, et detur eis regnum. Si prolem non habuerit, ueniat tamen ipse ad defendendum regnum et adiuuent eum homines ad deffensionem regni, et seruiant ei tanquam domino, excepto quod potestatem non habeat in castris seu uillis mutandi uel alienandi, et quando uxor eius uenire poterit, ueniat, et cum uenerit, detur ei regnum et ipsi Conrado, uiro eius, cum ea”: ibid.
38. See CLRC 34, 78.
39. “Si obierit forte Conradus habens filium uel filiam de filia regis Berengaria, ueniat ipsa filia regis Berengaria et proles sua ad Castellam, et detur eis regnum, et homines patrie exspectent aduentum eorum et custodiant regnum et nulli illud tradant nisi ipsis”: *Alfonso VIII*, #499, 2:861 (Apr. 23, 1188).
40. By contrast, the clause that provides for Conrad’s arrival in Castile with his children but without Berenguela, which also says that the kingdom should be given to “them,” refers to the children but not to Conrad. This is made clear by its subsequent stipulation that when Berenguela does arrive, “the kingdom shall be given to her and to Conrad, her husband, with her.”
41. *Alfonso VIII*, #499, 2:862–63 (Apr. 23, 1188).
42. “donationem propter nuptias, que uulgo dicitur apud Romanos doaire, apud Hispanos arras”: ibid., 2:858 (Apr. 23, 1188). For the *donatio propter nuptias*, see Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 33–34.
43. *Alfonso VIII*, #499, 2:859–62 (Apr. 23, 1188).

44. See Poulet, 99; cf. Parsons, “Family, Sex, and Power,” 3. See also Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 275, and Dillard, 43, on the Castilian custom of having both parents’ consent for a marriage.

45. See especially O’Callaghan, *The Cortes of Castile-León*; Estepa Díez, “Curia y Cortes,” 25–27, 32–35; and Martínez Díez, 142–43, 147. See also Cerda, “Assemblies.”

46. “Conradus, filius Frederici, Romanorum Imperatoris, in eadem uilla, scilicet Carrione . . . factus est miles a sepedicto rege Castelle. Cui desponsauit filiam suam dominam Berengariam, que uix erat octo annorum, et fecit sibi fieri omagium de toto regno ut idem Conradus regnaret post eum si contingeret ipsum decedere sine filio. Tunc enim non habebat filium rex gloriosus dominus A[lfonsus], sed filias”: CLRC II, 44.

47. Fernando III is a case in point. He was knighted in 1221, four years after his accession but just three days before he was married: DRH 9.10, 291; CLRC 40, 84.

48. “son tenudos de obedescer et de honrar á los que les dan la órden de caballeria”: *Siete Partidas* 2.21.16, ed. Manuel de Lardizabal et al., 2:211.

49. Ruíz, 124.

50. Some other examples from Alfonso VIII’s reign are the capture of Cuenca and the triumph at Las Navas de Tolosa. See, e.g., AHN, Sellos, 1/4 (Apr. 23, 1181) and AHN, Clero, 1049/5 (Jun. 5, 1213).

51. “eo etiam anno, et his diebus quibus sepedictus A., illustris rex Castelle et Toleti, Romani imperatoris filium, Conraddum nomine, accinxit in nouum militem, et ei filiam suam Berengariam tradidit in uxorem”: AHN, Clero, 904/6 (Jul. 28, 1188). See Cerda, “Assemblies.” Despite the diplomas’ language, Berenguela and Conrad were not technically married at Carrión. By the laws of the Church, she was too young to do more than consent to marry, and neither ecclesiastical nor royal custom would sanction the consummation of a marriage with an eight-year-old girl.

52. “in eadem curia rex Castelle nobilis Aldefonsus Conradum filium Frederici imperatoris Romani accinxit similiter cingulo militari et ei filiam suam primogenitam Berengariam desponsauit”: DRH 7.24, 246.

53. Pascua Echegaray, 105–6.

54. See, e.g., *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:365–74 (Mar. 26, 1206); *Alfonso IX*, #350, 2:458–59 (Nov. 26, 1217).

55. CLRC II, 44.

56. CLRC 33, 76; DRH 9.5, 285–86; AC Burgos, vol. 17, f. 434 (Apr. 23, 1188).

57. Grassotti, *Instituciones*, 1:202–9.

58. *Ibid.*, 1:112–14, 216, 223–27.

59. See Bisson, *Crisis*, 429, 494, 562–63.

60. The CLRC improbably reports that two months elapsed between the men’s visits to Carrión; the DRH records that they came to “the same curia” but, like the CLRC, deals with Alfonso IX’s visit first: CLRC II, 43–44; DRH 7.24, 246. The surviving diplomas tell their own story. Alfonso IX was in Carrión at the end of June: *Alfonso IX*, #10, 2:21–23 (Jun. 27, 1188). On July 4, a diploma of Alfonso VIII’s records his visit there, while saying nothing of Conrad’s marriage or knighthood: AHN, Clero, 904/4. Four days

later Alfonso IX was back in his own kingdom: *Alfonso IX*, #13, 2:28–29 (Jul. 8, 1188). The next surviving Castilian diploma, from July 28, is the first to mention both Alfonso IX and Conrad: AHN, Clero, 904/6.

61. “Tractatum igitur fuit et prouisum ut dicto Alfonso, regi Legionis, desponsaretur una de filiabus regis Castelle. . . . Fuit preterea positum et firmatum ut idem rex Legionis fieret miles a predicto rege Castelle et tunc oscularetur manum eius, quod et factum est. Celebrata namque curia famosa et nobili apud Carrionem, idem rex Legionis accinctus est gladio a predicto rege Castelle in ecclesia Sancti Zoili et osculatus est manum regis Castelle, presentibus Galleciis et Legionensibus et Castellanis”: CLRC II, 43–44.

62. “fórmula de humilde reconocimiento de la jerarquía superior de quien lo recibía”: Grassotti, *Instituciones*, 1:141, 151. See also Ruiz, 125.

63. DRH 7.24, 246.

64. “eo anno quo serenissimus rex prefatus A. Castelle A., regem Legionensem, cingulo milicie accinxit, et ipse A., rex Legionis, deosculatus fuit manum dicti Aldefonsi, regis Castelle et Toleti”: AHN, Clero, 904/6 (Jul. 28, 1188).

65. *Alfonso IX*, #13–14, 2:28–32 (Jul. 8 and 16, 1188). Pedro García de Lerma had confirmed Alfonso VIII’s diplomas fairly regularly until mid-1187: *Alfonso VIII*, #469, 2:802–4 (May 15, 1187). It is unclear where he was after that, though his brothers Gómez García and Ordoño García continued to confirm consistently.

66. *Alfonso IX*, #20, 2:38–39 (Mar. 6, 1189). Not all doors had been closed; by June Pedro García de Lerma returned to León, where he confirmed occasionally (though still not as majordomo) for the rest of the year.

67. *Alfonso VIII*, #520, 2:891–93 (Mar. 8, 1189).

68. “cingulo milicie me decoro”: *Alfonso IX*, #102, 2:149–50 (Jan. 23, 1197).

69. “Set ipso Conrado in Theutoniam reuertente predicta domicella desponsationi continuo contradixit”: DRH 7.24, 246.

70. The degree of their relationship indicates the near-impossibility of meeting canonical standards of consanguinity, especially among royals. According to one estimate, an individual could have as many as 3,000 consanguineous relatives whom he or she was forbidden to marry: Brundage, “Canon Law of Divorce,” 214. Berenguela’s great-great-great-grandfather, Raymond of Bourgogne, was the brother of Conrad’s great-grandfather, Etienne of Bourgogne: *Alfonso VIII*, 1:198 n.196.

71. “Mas esse don Corrado, tornado a Alemanna, contradixo luego esse desposaminto . . . et finco desta guisa por casar la donzella donna Berenguella”: PCG 997, 2:677a.

72. On the issue of Berenguela’s consent, see Shadis, *Berenguela*, 58–60. On the sometimes vague line between betrothal and marriage in twelfth-century thought, see Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 236–38, 262–69.

73. Shadis suggests that Plantagenet influence played a role, too: *Berenguela*, 59–60.

74. AHN, Clero, 978/13 (Apr. 23, 1189).

75. Ibid., 1397/17.

76. Ibid., 277/16 (Jul. 23, 1190); *Alfonso VIII*, #608, 3:80–81 (Dec. 8, 1192); *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116–1230)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #43, 78–79.

77. CLRC 12–13, 44–47; DRH 7.29–30, 251–52; Ibn 'Idari, 186–88.
78. “manebat alta mente repositum quod ei contingerat in curia . . . in Carrione celebrata”: CLRC 14, 47.

CHAPTER 2. QUEEN OF LEÓN, 1197–1204

1. For a review of such approaches, see LoPrete and Evergates, 1, and Parsons, “Mothers, Daughters,” 66; cf. Poulet, 103–5.
2. Parsons, “Mothers, Daughters,” 69–71.
3. Barton, *Aristocracy*, 39–43.
4. Earenfight, “Preface,” xiii.
5. Parsons argues persuasively that royal parents actively trained their daughters for success in such roles: “Mothers, Daughters,” 69, 74.
6. *Alfonso IX*, 1:7–8.
7. Martínez Sopena, 129–30, 140, 186, 189.
8. Rucquoi, 104.
9. Martínez Sopena, 132–33.
10. Rodríguez López, *Consolidación*, 139–40.
11. “Peruenit autem usque Carrionem, ubi uisus fuit purgare dedecus, quod sibi credebatur illatum quando manum regis Castellae fuit osculatus”: CLRC 14, 47.
12. The DRH says that in 1196 Alfonso VIII took the castles of Bolaños, Carpio, Castroverde, Paradinas, Valderas, and Valencia, while in 1197 he took Alba de Aliste, Ardón, Castrogonzalo, Castroleón, Castrotierra, and Monreal, and devastated Leonese lands as far west as Astorga and as far south as Salamanca: DRH 7.30, 252–53. The CLRC says that in 1196 Alfonso VIII took Castroverde and Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga; approached Benavente, where Alfonso IX and his army were; advanced as far west as the limits of the Bierzo, near the Portuguese border; and unsuccessfully besieged Astorga. In 1197, it says only that there was more fighting and Alfonso IX recovered Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga: CLRC 15, 49–50. The CM says that in a single campaign Alfonso VIII took Alba, Ardón, Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga, Castroverde, and Coyanza (Valencia), and unsuccessfully besieged Astorga; subsequently, he took Bárcena, Carpio, and Pozuelo: CM 4.83, 322; *ibid.*, 4.84, 323.
13. “Duo ferocissimi reges quasi duo ferocissimi leones, alter alteri cedere nesciebat”: *ibid.*
14. DRH 7.31, 253.
15. “rex nobilis hoc respueret, eo quod ipse et rex Legionensis consanguinitatis linea essent iuncti”: *ibid.* Their fathers, Sancho III of Castile and Fernando II of León, had been brothers. Alfonso IX and Berenguela were therefore second cousins, relatives in the third degree according to the reckoning currently in use. The Church prohibited marriages within seven degrees of kinship. The CLRC is equally quick to point out this problem (15, 50).

16. “Alienor regina uxor nobilis Aldefonsi, cum esset prudentissima, sagaci prouidencia et sollerte rerum pericula atendebat, quibus per coniunctionem huiusmodi poterat obuiari; et regi Legionis Vallem Oleti cum suis magnatibus uenienti dedit predictam filiam in uxorem”: DRH 7.31, 253.

17. Parsons, “Mothers, Daughters,” 63–65.

18. LoPrete, “Adela of Blois as Mother and Countess,” 321, 323–24; Tanner, 139; DeAragon, 105.

19. In 1197 the Almohads, perhaps working in concert with Alfonso IX, laid siege to Toledo for the third time in as many years, and attacked other sites in Castilian Extremadura and the Transierra with considerable success: DRH 7.30, 252; *Alfonso VIII*, 1:717–21.

20. The phrase *dedit predictam filiam in uxorem* lacks a pronoun to specify the gender of its singular subject; but the subject of the preceding sentence is Leonor, which makes her the implied subject of this one. In fact, Alfonso VIII is not the subject of any sentence in the chapter except the second-to-last (“For his part, the noble King Alfonso . . .”).

21. “omnia que abstulerat nunc genero, olim hosti, dedit filie sue nupte”: DRH 7.31, 253.

22. “illa V castella que rex Castelle dedit filie sue regine domne Berengaria [sic]”: *Alfonso IX*, #135, 2:195 (Dec. 8, 1199). Given the circumstances of the marriage, it is likely that these castles were in the Tierra de Campos, and the arras treaty may suggest that they were; see note 29.

23. “et fueron et dixieronle en poridad . . . diziendol que entre los reyes do tantos bienes podrien uenir por aquell casamiento et tantos males se desuiar, que mas era merçed que non peccado: demas quando lo fuesse, que todos darien et pecharien et ayunarien porque fuesse perdonado; et aun demas que este casamiento podrie durar fasta tiempo que les fiziessen algunos herederos, et desi que o el papa otogarie el casamiento, o se podrien ellos partir a tiempo por ley; et entre tanto passarien las yentes et el tiempo en paz et en bien”: PCG 1004, 2:683a. Shadis argues that this version of the story was meant to shift blame for the sinful alliance onto the queen: *Berenguela*, 62.

24. Linehan, *Spanish Church*, 11, 117, 120.

25. Alfonso VIII and Leonor were in Valladolid on August 18, 1197 (AHN, cód. 1046, pp. 97–98), though their movements for the rest of the year are unknown. Alfonso IX was also in the Tierra de Campos in October: AHN, Clero, 979/16 (Oct. 2, 1197, Carrión); *Alfonso IX*, #108, 2:157–8 (Oct. 17, 1197, Castronuño). After that, however, no other charters of his survive for this year.

26. “reformata est pax inter regem Legionis et regem Castelle, que non potuit aliter reformari nisi rex Castelle filiam suam dominam Berengariam regi Legionis copularet, in matrimonio”: CLRC 15, 50.

27. *Alfonso IX*, #132, 2:191 (Sep. 15, 1199); *ibid.*, #135, 2:194 (Dec. 8, 1199). The diploma of September 15 actually gives the man’s name as *Gunzalu Muniiz*, but scribes often erred in transcribing Núñez (*Nuniz*) as Muñoz (*Muniz*) and vice versa. The identification of this Gonzalo “Muñoz” with Gonzalo Núñez de Lara is supported by the fact

that *Gunzalu Muniiz* confirmed the diploma in the position usually reserved for Gonzalo Núñez—in fourth place, following only Count Gómez, Count Fernando Ponce, and Count Fruela.

Asturias (and Gonzalo Núñez's tenancy there) was already connected to Berenguela a full year before this diploma was made. A document from September 5, 1198, records that Gonzalo Núñez held Asturias "from the hand of the king and queen": AHN, cód. 1045, pp. 79–80.

28. The castle of Portilla, for example, had already changed hands at least three times during the 1190s: Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 281.

29. *Alfonso IX*, #135, 2:194 (Dec. 8, 1199). Oddly, two of these castles—Castroverde and Valencia—are among those that Alfonso VIII had captured in his 1196 and 1197 campaigns, according to the chronicles. (The DRH adds a third, Castrogonzalo.) Had Alfonso IX recovered them before the arras treaty was made? Or were they part of the marriage portion Berenguela had received from her father?

30. CM 4.85, 325.

31. Conflict resolution was a common function for royal arras properties in Iberia. See Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 276; Rodrigues and Santos Silva, 211.

32. Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 277. The sixteen are Alba de Tormes, Benavente, Castronuevo, Castrotoraf, Ciudad Rodrigo, Coria, Granada, Ledesma, Mayorga, Monleón, Salamanca, Toro, Villafáfila, Villalpando, Zamora, and the city of León itself.

33. *Alfonso IX*, #135, 2:194 (Dec. 8, 1199).

34. *Ibid.*

35. Barton, *Aristocracy*, 53.

36. AHN, cód. 1045, p. 51 (May 11, 1198).

37. During the early years of Alfonso VIII's marriage, a provincial notary similarly labeled his new queen "Leonor the Englishwoman," *Anglica Elionor. Alfonso VIII*, 1:191.

38. *Ibid.*, 1:189.

39. *Ibid.*, #148, 2:253–54; 1:190.

40. *Ibid.*, #331–563. Many of the 22 diplomas in which Leonor is not named are writs or treaties, documents that were not typically co-issued by other members of the royal family.

41. *Ibid.*, 1:254–55; *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116–1230)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #85–87, 140–43 (all February 1207).

42. See, e.g., AHN, Clero, 1652/14 (Jul. 21, 1208).

43. AHN, cód. 1045, pp. 123–24. This copy of the charter was made in the early thirteenth century, but it is corrupt; the list of confirmers in particular is disorganized and incomplete. The other copy, which survives in the same codex and includes a similar dating formula, is dated April 1198: *ibid.*, pp. 130–31. Although the terms of the donation in both charters are the same, there are significant differences in wording and in the list of confirmers, which suggest that the donation was actually made or confirmed a second time. The dates, however, are solid enough; the tenancies listed in the charters match those known to be in effect in April and May of 1198, and royal diplomas show that

Alfonso VIII and Leonor, at least, were in Palencia on May 8 of that year: AHN, Clero, 979/18 and 1737/5. The movements of Alfonso IX and Berenguela are less clear, but they were in Salamanca on April 14 (*Alfonso IX*, #113, 2:162–63) and could easily have traveled from there to Palencia by the end of the month.

44. If her daughter Leonor was born in late 1198, then the birth must have occurred before the beginning of December. The itinerary of the Leonese court is poorly documented during most of the year, but it becomes clear again in December, when Alfonso IX and Berenguela can be found in a new location every week: *Alfonso IX*, #119–21, 2:171–75 (Dec. 10, 17, 23, 1198). Such active traveling argues that Berenguela had already had time to deliver Leonor and recover from the birth.

45. Parsons demonstrates that English monarchs of this period took an active interest in the birth of their daughters' children: "Mothers, Daughters," 71–72.

46. *Alfonso IX*, #115, 2:165–66 (Aug. 15, 1198). There are no surviving Castilian royal diplomas from August 1198, so that court's whereabouts cannot be confirmed.

47. *Alfonso VIII*, #674, 3:194–95.

48. *Ibid.*, 1:727; see also Chapter 3.

49. *Alfonso IX*, 1:116.

50. Again, these numbers include writs and treaties; and again, Berenguela gave birth to at least four children during this period.

51. I have been unable to find more than a summary version of the eighth diploma, though that version attributes the document solely to Berenguela: *CD Catedral de Astorga*, ed. Caverio Domínguez and Martín López, #941, 232 (1198).

52. "ego Berengaria, Dei gratia Legionis et Gallecie regina, de beneplacito et de precepto domini regis Legionensis mariti mei, et etiam intuitu pietatis et misericordie, necnon et pro salute propria et remedio anime mee et parentum meorum, facio cartam": *Alfonso IX*, #109, 2:158 (Dec. 27, 1197).

53. Earenfight, "Preface," xvii.

54. Martínez Sopena, 306.

55. "Dono namque et concedo vobis in perpetuum percipiendam decimam omnium cellariorum regni mei . . . preter illud quod dominus rex maritus meus aliis Ordinibus privilegio suo roboratum tribuit": *Alfonso IX*, #109, 2:158.

56. *Ibid.*, #91, 2:135–37 (Apr. 5, 1194); *ibid.*, #94, 139–40 (May 20, 1195); AHN, Clero, 948/6 (Dec. 28, 1189).

57. See, e.g., *Alfonso VIII*, #950, 3:645 (undated).

58. "Ego Berengaria dei gratia legionensis atque Gallecie Regina, credens et omnino sciens ex pio opere uitam consequi sempiternam, laudo approbo et confirmo deo et monasterio Sancti petri de asluenza, illam libertatem et consuetudinem et forum quod auus meus Aldefonsus hypaniarum [sic] imperator laudabilis memorie dicto monasterio sancti petri concessit et dedit": AHN, Clero, 966/3 (Dec. 31, 1197).

59. I have found no evidence that any of the other women who were queens of Castile or León during Berenguela's lifetime (her mother Leonor, her daughters-in-law Beatriz and Juana, and Queen Teresa of León) independently confirmed a previous monarch's privilege.

60. “Preterea hec presenti scripto notum facio uniuersis Regni mei presentibus et futuris, me iam dictum monasterium Sancti petri . . . sub mea tutela et protectione proculdubio recipisse”: AHN, Clero, 966/3 (Dec. 31, 1197).

61. Berenguela’s daughter-in-law Beatriz did this at least once: *ibid.*, 913/19 (Nov. 22, 1231).

62. She made a gift of property to the monastery in December 1203: *Alfonso IX*, #181, 2:253.

63. The Infantazgo here had previously also belonged to Alfonso VI’s sister Urraca: García Calles, 85.

64. “Notum sit omnibus quod ego Verenguela Legione regia [sic] concedente marito meo dono rege Alfonso per scriptum valiturum ob remedium animae meae et parentum meorum et ad instantiam precum domini Lupi asturicensis episcopi et canonicorum ipsorum ecclesiae tam presentes quam futuros, casas, bestias, haereditates, homines vestores et omes res et omnia quae habitis vel habituri estis incomendam meam recipio et defensionem huius autem concessionis et defensionis in cartationem facio omnibus canonicis de Astorica ob remedium animae meae et pro bono seruitio quod in praedicta ecclesia Deo iugiter exigebitur. . . . Ego Verengaria regina hoc scriptum quod fieri iussi proprio robore concedo et confirmo”: *CD Catedral de Astorga*, ed. Caverro Domínguez and Martín López, #939, 231–32 (March 1198).

65. *Ibid.*

66. See Bedos-Rezak, 64.

67. The extent of her dominion in her arras properties is in keeping with what we know about the authority of Iberian queens over their arras in the later Middle Ages, when rights and incomes are better documented. See Rodrigues and Santos Silva, 213.

68. *Alfonso IX*, #151–52, 2:213–16 (May 31, 1201); *ibid.*, #155, 2:218–19 (Jul. 30, 1201); *ibid.*, #156, 2:219–20 (Aug. 5, 1201); *ibid.*, #162, 2:226–27 (Nov. 25, 1201); *ibid.*, #163, 2:27–32 (1202?); AHN, cód. 324, f. 277r–278r (Jan. 13, 1202; confirmed by Fernando III Apr. 20, 1232); *Alfonso IX*, #165, 2:233–34 (Jan. 13, 1202); *ibid.*, #166, 2:235 (February 1202); *ibid.*, #178, 2:251–52 (July 1203).

69. *Ibid.*, #160, 2:224 (October 1201); *ibid.*, #122, 2:175–76 (Jan. 19, 1199); *ibid.*, #129, 2:185–86 (Jul. 11, 1199).

70. “libero et excuso de toto pecto et facendaria et fisco regio”: *Patrimonio cultural de San Isidoro de León*, ed. Martín López, #168, 204. *Pecho* was a general term for levies; *facendaria* was labor services on roads and bridges.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Again, “libero et excuso de toto pecto et facendaria et fisco regio”: *Alfonso IX*, #127, 2:183.

73. As Infanta Sancha did, for example: García Calles, 108.

74. For her future interactions with San Isidoro, see Chapter 5; for her lordship in León, see below. Lucas of Tuy, her chronicler, was a canon at San Isidoro.

75. “Fuit prefata Berengaria filia regis Castelle adeo sapientissima, quod patris sapiencia ad eam defluxisse uideretur. Hec cum primo uenit Legionem blandis precibus a

uiro suo rege Adefonso obtinuit, ut corrigeret mores et foros Legionensis ciuitatis et regni et grauamina releuaret. Hedificauit regina Berengaria palacium regale in Legione ex lapidibus et calce iuxta monasterium sancti Ysidori et turres Legionis, quas rex barbarus quondam destruxerat Almazor, ex calce et lapidibus similiter restaurauit. Hec regina serenissima auro, argento, lapidibus preciosis et sericis indumentis monasterium beati Ysidori et ceteras regni principales ecclesias studuit decorare”: CM 4.85, 326.

76. Stafford, “Portrayal,” 147; Ferrante, 69.

77. “Alter nostris temporibus Salomon idem rex iuxta predictam domum Domini hedificauit palacium regis” (The king, another Solomon in our times, built the palace of the king next to the house of God): CM 4.84, 324.

78. See her relationship with Pedro Fernández de Benavides, discussed below.

79. Cf. Earenfight, “Preface,” xxiv.

80. AHN, cód. 1045, pp. 230–31 (Jan. 28, 1200).

81. *Documentos de . . . Salamanca*, ed. Martín Martín, #110, 199 (January 1200).

82. *Alfonso IX*, #136, 2:197–98 (Jan. 6, 1200).

83. AHN, cód. 1045, pp. 230–31 (Jan. 28, 1200); *Alfonso VIII*, #681, 3:204–8 (Dec. 8, 1199). The charter also lists Alfonso IX’s majordomo and alférez, but apparently only as part of the dating formula; they are not said to have confirmed the act.

84. See García Calles, 24; Estepa Díez, “Curia y Cortes,” 55.

85. *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1756, 6:122–24 (Jan. 28, 1200). The charter does not name its location, but the presence of numerous canons and laymen from the city of León shows that it was made there.

86. Cf. *Alfonso IX*, #136, 2:197–98 (Jan. 6, 1200).

87. *CD Catedral de Oviedo*, ed. García Larragueta, #215, 507–8.

88. Pérez-Bustamante, 197.

89. *Documentos de . . . Salamanca*, ed. Martín Martín, #108, 197 (April 1199); *ibid.*, #119, 208 (August 1203).

90. García Calles, 30.

91. See, e.g., *Alfonso IX*, #105, 2:154 (Jul. 13, 1197).

92. That this happened against the count’s will is attested by a donation to Sobrado on November 8, 1201: “Dominante terra ista Roderico Gundisalui, Comite Gometio Eiecta”: *Tumbos . . . de Sobrado de los Monjes*, ed. Loscertales de García de Valdeavellano, #223, 1:259–60.

93. *Ibid.*, #561, 1:491; AHN, Clero, 1326D/6 (Jan. 1, 1203). A charter of July 13, 1202, still identifies Count Gómez as tenant there: *ibid.*, 498/7. But the fact that Count Gómez lost his other Galician tenancies in 1200 (see below) strongly argues that he lost this one at the same time.

94. *Ibid.*, 533/20.

95. *Alfonso IX*, #145, 2:207.

96. AHN, Clero, 980/7 (February 1201); *ibid.*, 1796/11 (Apr. 11, 1201); *ibid.*, 1440/14 (Apr. 15, 1201, conf. Jun. 26, 1228).

97. AHN, cód. 1044, n. 22; *Tumbos . . . de Sobrado de los Monjes*, ed. Loscertales de García de Valdeavellano, #217, 1:255 (Mar. 30, 1201).

98. *Alfonso IX*, #150, 2:213. As transcribed by González, the diploma names Gonzalo Peláez as the tenant of Monteroso, but this is an error. Another diploma from May 1201 gives the name as Gonzalo Yáñez (AHN, Clero, 534/8), as do subsequent documents through March 12, 1203 (*Alfonso IX*, #174, 2:247).

99. Rodrigo and Gonzalo are lamentably common names among the Leonese and Castilian nobility. One of the great families in which they recur, however, is the Traba, and I am inclined to think that this Rodrigo González belonged to that lineage. Keeping at least some of Count Gómez's former tenancies in the hands of his relatives would have been politic for Alfonso IX, and it explains why, of all the Leonese nobles, Rodrigo González was the one who began to reconsolidate the old Traba tenancies in the months before Count Gómez returned to court (see below).

100. The peace treaty sealed in 1218 between León and Castile lists "Rodrigo González, son of Gonzalo Gómez" among the nobles who are bound on Castile's behalf to ensure that the treaty is kept. Gonzalo Gómez was a son of Count Gómez González; his name was probably added here to prevent confusion between his son and the Castilian noble Rodrigo González Girón: *Alfonso IX*, #366, 2:479 (Aug. 26, 1218).

101. AHN, OO.MM., 419/44.

102. *Alfonso VIII*, #711, 3:255–57 (Dec. 11, 1201); *Alfonso IX*, #168, 2:239 (Apr. 25, 1202). The latter document erroneously describes Pedro Fernández as the queen's merino. He held the tenancy through a proxy, or *prestamero*, Rodrigo Peláez: AHN, Clero, 498/4 (Jan. 12, 1202); *ibid.*, 498/7 (Jul. 13, 1202).

103. AHN, cód. 976, f. 137r (Sep. 29, 1203); and see, e.g., *Alfonso IX*, #183, 2:256 (May 1204).

104. Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 293; Martínez Sopena, 522.

105. Cf. the work of Ana Maria S.A. Rodrigues and Manuela Santos Silva on the later medieval Portuguese Casa da Rainha, arras properties in which the queen had full titular authority, but it was nearly always the king who dispensed patronage. See Rodrigues and Santos Silva, 219–20; also Rodrigues, 480–83. Santos Silva generally sees the queen's power within the Casa da Rainha as more similar to that of a lord than that of a monarch: Santos Silva, 122–24, 148, 150–51.

106. Pascua and Rodríguez, 52–53; Pascua Echegaray, 190.

107. CM 4.85, 325.

108. Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 277.

109. He held Asturias at least from January 1198 (AHN, Clero, 1571/4) through September 28, 1199 (*Alfonso IX*, #134, 2:193), when the tenancy was already termed "the queen's arras," *arras regine*.

110. *Ibid.*, #136, 2:198 (Jan. 6, 1200).

111. *Ibid.*, #132, 2:191 (Sep. 15, 1199). At this date he also held the castle of Burón for Berenguela; he reappeared in that tenancy later, although the terms of the arras charter had given it to Sebastián Gutiérrez. See, e.g., *ibid.*, #169, 2:241 (Aug. 23, 1202).

González believes that this Álvaro Díaz was a Leonese noble, not the Castilian Álvaro Díaz de Cameros: *Fernando III*, 1:170. An Álvaro Díaz did confirm Leonese diplomas in

the mid- to late 1180s, but he subsequently disappears, and it is not clear that he was the same man who sporadically confirmed diplomas during Berenguela's marriage. Álvaro Díaz de Cameros, meanwhile, does not appear at the Castilian court until at least 1210, and did not confirm there consistently until Berenguela became queen of Castile. He was therefore free to attend on Berenguela in León during her marriage, and follow her to the Castilian court upon her accession in the hopes of continued patronage.

112. AHN, Clero, 966/4 (Feb. 4, 1198); AHN, cód. 1045, p. 67 (Mar. 28, 1202); cf. AHN, Clero, 826/12 (July 1214).

113. Martínez Sopena, 400–401. I will refer to Fernando García as *de Villamayor* for the sake of clarity, although the Villamayor lineage properly started with his son García Fernández: *ibid.*, 401.

114. See, e.g., AHN, cód. 1045, p. 22 (Aug. 4, 1198); *Alfonso IX*, #129, 2:186 (Jul. 11, 1199); AHN, cód. 976, f. 104r (Oct. 4, 1200).

115. A Fernando García served as Alfonso IX's majordomo in 1195: see, e.g., *Alfonso IX*, #90, 2:135 (Dec. 28, 1194); AHN, OO.MM., 385/72 (Nov. 12, 1195). If this was the same man, then he was absent from both the Leonese and Castilian courts until he was reinstated as Alfonso IX's majordomo in 1197.

116. *Alfonso IX*, #109, 2:57–58.

117. AHN, cód. 1002, f. 28v (Feb. 20, 1198); AHN, cód. 967, f. 103r (Jun. 7, 1203).

118. He last appears at the court of Castile on May 8, 1198 (AHN, Clero, 1737/5; *ibid.*, 979/18), and first appears at that of León on November 23: *Alfonso IX*, #118, 2:169–71. See, e.g., AHN, Clero, 908/10 (Jan. 16, 1200); *ibid.*, 1125/17 (Jun. 25, 1203).

119. Martínez Sopena, 383.

120. He reappears at the Castilian court on August 31, 1204: *Alfonso VIII*, #763, 3:332–34.

121. He dated a donation to the monastery of Sahagún as follows: "In the reign of King Alfonso, who defeated Almiramomenin at Las Navas de Tolosa, with his wife Leonor and with his son Enrique in Toledo and Castile. Also in the reign of King Alfonso with his wife Berenguela and with his son Fernando in León and in Galicia": AHN, Clero, 911/4 (Jul. 24, 1214). González tries to account for this by redating the charter to 1204 (*Fernando III*, 1:69 n.21), but the reference to Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) makes it obvious that the date of 1214 is not an error.

122. AHN, Clero, 966/10 (September 1201).

123. See, e.g., *Alfonso IX*, #118, 2:170 (Nov. 23, 1198; Extremadura); *ibid.*, #120, 2:173 (Dec. 17, 1198; Zamora); *ibid.*, #121, 2:175 (Dec. 23, 1198; Toro); AHN, cód. 1045, p. 258 (Mar. 19, 1199; Coria); *Alfonso IX*, #172, 2:244 (Dec. 18, 1202; Transierra).

124. She first appears as tenant there in April 1199: *Documentos de . . . Salamanca*, ed. Martín Martín, #108, 197. The previous tenant, Ponce Vélez de Cabrera, last appears on August 17, 1198: *ibid.*, #107, 196.

125. See, e.g., AHN, Clero, 533/20 (Nov. 27, 1200).

126. *CD Monasterio de Gradefes*, ed. Burón Castro, #237, 294 (Dec. 2, 1197); *ibid.*, #285, 351 (1204).

127. AHN, Clero, 966/4 (Feb. 4, 1198); *Alfonso IX*, #179, 2:252 (July 1203).
128. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:253–55.
129. See, e.g., AHN, Clero, 993/1 (Feb. 26, 1189); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1684, 6:13 (Mar. 8, 1190).
130. See, e.g., AHN, Clero, 993/7 (Jul. 30, 1197); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1748, 6:111 (June 1199).
131. Or, as Lucas of Tuy would have it, “he was compelled to marry Teresa, King Sancho’s daughter,” to make the alliance, *compulsus fuit ducere in uxorem Tharasiam filiam eiusdem regis Sancii*: CM 4.82, 320.
132. *Alfonso IX*, #40, 2:66–67 (Feb. 15, 1191); *ibid.*, #41, 2:68–9 (Mar. 29, 1191). The bishops who accompanied Alfonso IX to Portugal to meet his bride were almost exclusively Galician (*ibid.*, 1:62); the only exception is Bishop Lope of Astorga, in the Bierzo. The importance accorded to the Galician prelates in this moment, and the lack of involvement of their Leonese counterparts, foreshadows the close ties that would endure between Galicia and Portugal, and between Galicia and Teresa herself.
133. *Ibid.*, 1:67, 310.
134. *Ibid.*, #45, 2:73–74, AHN, Clero, 1128/17, and *Alfonso IX*, #47, 2:75–76 (all June 1191); *ibid.*, #49, 2:78–81 (Feb. 1, 1192).
135. That is, from February 1, 1191 (*ibid.*, #40, 2:66–67) through April 10, 1194 (*ibid.*, #78, 2:115). On April 20, 1194, Alfonso IX sealed the Treaty of Tordehumos with Alfonso VIII, providing a *terminus ante quem* for his alliance with Portugal: *ibid.*, #79, 2:116–19.
136. Parsons, “Family, Sex, and Power,” 2; Stafford, *Queens*, xvii, 195; Stafford, “Portrayal,” 144.
137. Stafford, *Queens*, 131, 134; Parsons, “Ritual and Symbol,” 61–62. See Earenfight, “Absent Kings,” 35 n.11.
138. See, e.g., AHN, cód. 976, f. 116r (February 1200), where “Queen Teresa” is the tenant of Villafranca.
139. See, e.g., AHN, OO.MM., carp. 384.
140. On the choice of this location, see Sánchez Ameijeiras, 492–93.
141. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:199 n.199; *Fernando III*, 1:62 n.4; *Alfonso IX*, 1:314.
142. *Fernando III*, 1:63 n.10. It was common for men to name their firstborn sons after their own fathers. Alfonso IX followed this practice enthusiastically; some years later he christened yet another son Fernando, the offspring of an extramarital liaison with doña Mayor González: AHN, Clero, 3550/15 (Aug. 31, 1207); *ibid.*, 1881/17 (Dec. 16, 1223); *ibid.*, 1881/18 (Dec. 18, 1223).
143. *Fernando III*, 1:62 n.4–5.
144. *Alfonso IX*, #156, 2:219–20 (Aug. 5, 1201).
145. “me existente apud Benauentum et presentibus episcopis et uasallis meis et multis de qualibet uilla de regni mei in plena curia”: *ibid.*, #167, 2:236 (Mar. 11, 1202). The presence of town delegates is the reason that this gathering is usually designated as a Cortes, although at this stage the parliamentary functions of such assemblies were embryonic at best: Bisson, *Crisis*, 579–80.

146. Estepa Díez, “Curia y Cortes,” 27, 74.

147. See O’Callaghan, *The Cortes*, 17.

148. *Inocencio III*, #196, 214 (May 25, 1199).

149. “tu, de quo miramur non modicum, callide procurasti, ut ei pene penitus totum regnum Legionense iuraret”: *ibid.*, #276, 306 (Jun. 5, 1203).

150. “ei de mandato patris pontifices, magnates et ciuitatum concilia bis iurent”: DRH 9.14, 295.

CHAPTER 3. THE UNWED QUEEN, 1204–1214

1. “Sane ad audientiam nostram pervenit, quod karissimus in Christo filius noster rex Castelle illustris regi Legionensi, qui eum secundo gradu consanguinitatis contingit, filiam suam, neptim illius, ne copulare dicamus, supponere incestuose presumpsit. . . . Unde nos eorum utrique dedimus in mandatis, ut tam turpem contractum, abominabilem in conspectu Domini et iudicio fidelium detestandum, omni dilatione et excusatione postpositis, revocent et universas colligationes impietatis dissolvant, quas inter se sub huius incesti specie inierunt. . . . et si super hoc, quod non credimus, fuerint contumaces, in personas eorum excommunicationis et in terram interdicti sententias non differas promulgare”: *Inocencio III*, #138, 168–69 (Apr. 16, 1198).

2. *Ibid.*, #196, 211 (May 25, 1199). Excommunication barred an individual from participating in the rites or receiving the sacraments of the Church. Interdict forbade the performance of all church services and sacraments within the affected region, so that such rites as marriage and Christian burial were unavailable to anyone who lived there.

3. The pope’s indignation soon compelled Alfonso IX to restore Juan to his see: *Inocencio III*, #144, 175–76 (May 22, 1198); *Alfonso IX*, #115, 2:165–66 (Aug. 15, 1198).

4. *Inocencio III*, #196, 211 (May 25, 1199).

5. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:727.

6. “in eum . . . excommunicationis sententiam promulgavit”: *Inocencio III*, #196, 211 (May 25, 1199).

7. Berenguela’s arras treaty of 1199, which specifies what would happen to her properties if Alfonso IX imprisoned, abused, or killed her, is a sufficient reminder of the situation’s bleaker possibilities: *Alfonso IX*, #135, 2:195 (Dec. 8, 1199).

8. *Inocencio III*, #196, 212 (May 25, 1199).

9. *Ibid.*, 212–14.

10. The pope’s letters do not concede Berenguela the title of queen of León, because her legally invalid marriage gave her no right to it.

11. “Quia vero castra quedam, que idem rex Legionensis dicte filie regis Castelle in dotem tradidisse proponitur, ita ut, si eam aliqua occasione relinqueret, ipsa cederent in ius eius, impedimentum prestare videntur huiusmodi copule dissolvende, cum castra ipsa non tam ob turpem quam ob nullam potius causam sint data, utpote cum inter eos matrimonium non existat, et ideo nec dos nec donatio propter dotem, ne ad commodum

ei cedat . . . castra ipsa restitui volumus et ad id puellam ipsam per excommunicationis sententiam coarctari”: *ibid.*, 214 (May 25, 1199).

12. “ne castra predicta restituere cogeretur, cum non ab eo, sed ab eius filia tenerentur”: *ibid.*, #305, 338 (Jun. 20, 1204).

13. *Ibid.*, #196, 214 (May 25, 1199). The English chronicler Roger of Howden reports that Alfonso IX offered the pope a hefty bribe to disregard the marriage for three years or until it had produced children. Roger says that Innocent rejected the offer, but the hiatus in papal pressure between 1199 and 1203 calls his claim into question. See Shadis, *Beren-guela*, 69.

14. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:728.

15. *Ibid.*, 1:729.

16. “Cum enim predicto regi de terra tua consiliarios deputaris, et fere universe munitiones ipsius detineantur a tuis, tanquam frenum in os eius posueris, ipsum pro tue voluntatis arbitrio circumducis, et quasi non minus de terra eius quam de proprio regno disponis”: *Inocencio III*, #276, 306 (Jun. 5, 1203).

17. “Verum sicut frequenti relatione didicimus et publica fama clamat usque adeo illaqueasti regem eundem, et sic circumvenisti simplicitatem ipsius, ut sine multo dispendio regni sui, filiam tuam a se, si velit etiam, non valeat separare, cum plures et meliores munitiones regni Legionensis nomine predictae filie tue receperis, et per tuos feceris et facias custodiri, eidem tue filie remansuras, si fuerit a regē relicta”: *ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Alfonso IX*, #178, 2:251–52 (July 1203).

20. *Documentos de . . . Salamanca*, ed. Martín Martín, #119, 208.

21. *Patrimonio cultural de San Isidoro de León*, ed. Martín López, #179, 214–15 (Jul. 30, 1203); *Alfonso IX*, #180, 2:252–53.

22. *Ibid.*, #181, 2:253.

23. *Ibid.*, #182, 2:253–54 (February 1204).

24. No diplomas survive for the month of March. AHN, Clero, 169/17 (Feb. 26, 1204); *Alfonso VIII*, #759–61, 3:326–30 (Apr. 1, May 6, and May 6, 1204).

25. He was born on April 14: *ibid.*, 1:733.

26. *Ibid.*, 1:734.

27. “nobilis mulier”: *Inocencio III*, #299, 332.

28. *Ibid.*, #304, 336 (Jun. 19, 1204). It appears that the Leonese bishops did not actually absolve Alfonso IX until October: *Alfonso IX*, #190, 2:265–66.

29. *Ibid.*, #183, 2:255–56; Grassotti, *Instituciones*, 1:278, 297–98; Bisson, *Crisis*, 299.

30. The CLRC says that Alfonso VIII “loved him and trusted him above anyone else alive”: CLRC 28, 68.

31. *Alfonso IX*, #184, 2:256–57 (Jun. 27, 1204); cf. *CD Monasterio de San Vicente de Oviedo*, ed. Sanz Fuentes and Ruiz de la Peña Solar, #4, 43 (Apr. 8, 1204).

32. *Alfonso IX*, #184, 2:257 (Jun. 27, 1204).

33. *Ibid.*, #182, 2:253–54 (February 1204); *Alfonso VIII*, #763, 3:332–34 (Aug. 31, 1204).

34. Ibid., #762, 3:330–32; *Alfonso IX*, #189, 2:264 (Sep. 25, 1204).
35. “Causa uero discordie inter gloriosum regem Castelle et regem Legionis fuerat quod idem rex Legionis dimiserat filiam regis Castelle, reginam scilicet dominam Berengariam, de qua idem rex Legionis iam susceperat duos filios et duas filias”: CLRC 17, 52. They had had three daughters, but the eldest, Leonor, had already died.
36. *Inocencio III*, #326, 353–54 (Jan. 28, 1206). González dates this letter to 1205: *Alfonso VIII*, 1:737.
37. Ibid. Alfonso VIII argued that Queen Leonor had inheritance claims in Gascoigne, which her Angevin relatives roundly denied. His campaign was unsuccessful.
38. These were Bolaños, the two Sieros, Valderas, and Villafrechós. The treaty had also required Alfonso VIII to return two castles that are not named in this will, Villarmenteros and Villavicencio: *ibid.*, #622, 3:105–8 (Apr. 20, 1194).
39. Ibid., #769, 3:342 (Dec. 8, 1204).
40. Ibid.
41. The last diplomas he confirmed were issued November 11, 1204: *Alfonso IX*, #194–95, 2:271–74.
42. Ibid., #196, 2:275 (Jan. 23, 1205). Lope Díaz first confirmed a diploma of Alfonso VIII's on December 20, 1208, after his father had regained the king's favor: *Alfonso VIII*, #833, 3:460–62.
43. It had previously been held by Pedro Fernández de Castro. Thereafter, no tenant appears in control of the Leonese Transierra until August 1206: *Alfonso IX*, #212, 2:299 (Aug. 9, 1206).
44. It went to Álvaro Rodríguez Diablo, a Leonese noble native to the Tierra de Campos: *ibid.*, #185, 2:259 (Aug. 2, 1204); *CD Monasterio de Carrizo*, ed. Casado Lobato, #72, 84 (November 1204); *Alfonso IX*, #204, 2:284 (Feb. 4, 1206); *ibid.*, #121, 2:175 (Dec. 23, 1198); *Documentos zamoranos*, ed. Martín, #61, 56 (Jan. 18, 1204); *Alfonso IX*, #186, 2:260 (Sep. 16, 1204).
45. He appears in royal diplomas as the tenant of both places on September 19, 1204 (*Alfonso IX*, #187, 2:262) and November 11, 1204 (*ibid.*, #193, 2:271). Since another royal diploma of September 25, 1204, lists Rodrigo González de Traba as tenant of Montenegro and Sarria (*ibid.*, #189, 2:265), Alfonso IX had probably made the two men co-tenants during this period.
46. He held Lemos, Monteroso, and Trastámara from mid-September 1204: *ibid.*, #187, 2:262 (Sep. 19, 1204); *ibid.*, #186, 2:260 (Sep. 16, 1204). Count Gómez González de Traba often appears as his co-tenant in Trastámara.
47. “Negotium, quod inter karissimos filios nostros regem Legionensem illustrem ex una parte et regem Castelle ac filiam eius ex altera super quibusdam vertitur castris”: *Inocencio III*, #331, 358.
48. “Et la reina de León dona Berenguela, filia del rei de Castella, da, a es suo filio, Cabreros.” Cabreros is not included in the subsequent list of Berenguela's arras properties, which she and Alfonso IX are both said to give away: *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:365–66 (Mar. 26, 1206).

49. Castilian and Leonese royal women commonly assumed such roles. However, many of the most prominent examples—Alfonso VII's wife and his sister Sancha negotiating with the rebellious Count Gonzalo Pérez, or Violante speaking with noble rebels on behalf of her husband Alfonso X—are of women in debate with their kingdom's own magnates. Berenguela's unusual position as negotiator with a foreign king derived, in this case, from her having held the same position during her marriage to that king. Still, she would later continue to take this role in negotiations with foreign monarchs to whom she had not been married.

50. See Stafford, "Portrayal," 163; Ferrante, 69; Shadis, *Berenguela*, 10.

51. See, e.g., *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:365.

52. There were two additions, Castroponce and Melgar.

53. Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 279. The castles were Alba de Aliste, Arboleya, Gordón, La Ferrera, Luna, and Tiedra.

54. *Alfonso IX*, #184, 2:257 (Jun. 27, 1204). Pedro Rodríguez held Mansilla between May 31, 1201 (*ibid.*, #152, 2:216) and January 13, 1202 (*ibid.*, #165, 2:234); during that period he also held Mayorga, another Tierra de Campos town connected with Berenguela through her possession of Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga. Pedro Rodríguez de Quiñones took over the towers of León from Pedro Fernández de Benavides, Berenguela's major-domo, by November 1199 (*Patrimonio cultural de San Isidoro*, ed. Martín López, #170, 206) and held them through October 26, 1204: AHN, Clero, 993/14.

55. AHN, OO.MM., 386/89 (Aug. 11, 1202); *Alfonso IX*, #184, 2:257 (Jun. 27, 1204).

56. "Et todos estos castellos deue auer el sobredicho nieto del rei de Castella, filio del rei de León . . . por iuro de eredad pro siempre. Et demás, otorgal el rei de León, suo padre, despues su morte, todo suo regno; et fazel end fazer omenage dél. Todos los castellos sobrenombrados son del regno de León, pero assi que el sobredicho filio del rei de León los aia por iuro de eredad, assi quomodo dicho es de suso": *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:366 (Mar. 26, 1206). The treaty's stipulation that Alfonso IX "causes the kingdom to do homage to" Fernando might imply the summoning of another *curia plena*, like the one held at Benavente in 1202. The DRH does say that "the whole kingdom" of León did him homage as heir twice, and one of those acts may have been arranged at Cabrerros. Alfonso IX is known to have held a *curia plena* at León in 1208, but there is no evidence of whether it included homage to Fernando.

57. *Yantar*, which originated in the obligation of the king's properties to house and feed him on his occasional visits, had by now evolved into a fixed monetary payment: Pérez-Bustamante, 130. Alfonso IX collected 60 maravedís a year in both Valderas and Villafrechós, 50 in Bolaños, and 30 in Siero de Riaño (no amount is given for Siero de Asturias): *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:366.

58. *Ibid.*, 3:367. Villafraña was in the Bierzo, near the Portuguese border, a region where Teresa naturally had important strategic interests and Berenguela, equally naturally, did not. Benavente was itself part of the Tierra de Campos, but it stood on the border between that region and the Bierzo. Teresa's rents within the Bierzo posed no immediate threat to Berenguela's rights in the Tierra de Campos and southeastern Asturias—but

Berenguela and Alfonso VIII were both keenly aware of the dangers that Teresa and her thirteen-year-old son presented to four-year-old Fernando's expectations of the Leonese throne. Those dangers were sufficient reason to limit Teresa's power in León in any way possible.

59. Ibid.

60. The porter (*portero*) was a high officer in the royal household. His duties included precisely this responsibility, of delivering castles to tenants, but he served in military capacities as well: *Fernando III*, 1:122–23.

61. *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:367. Since the idea of compensating Berenguela for her arras castles would not please the pope, the treaty forbade Alfonso IX from appealing to Rome as a way to avoid paying her 8,000 maravedís: *ibid.*, 3:368.

62. *Ibid.*, 3:367–70.

63. Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 280. The Castilian-held castles were Alba de Aliste, Alión, Almanza, Arboleya, Bolaños, Cabrerros, Carpio, Castrogonzalo, Castrotierra, Castroverde, La Ferrera, Gordón, Luna, Monreal, Peñafiel, Portilla, Siero de Asturias, Siero de Riaño, Tiedra, Valderas, Valencia, Villafrechós, and Villalugán. The Leonese-held castles were Aguilar de Asturias, Aguilar de Mola, Aguilar de Pedraio, Alba de Buval, Buanga, Burón, Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga, Colle, Coriel, Gozón, La Isla, Lugás, Miranda de Nieva, Peñafiel de Aller, San Pelayo de Lodo, Santa Cruz de Tineo, Siero de Oviedo, Tudela, Vega, and Ventosa: *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:369.

64. Erler and Kowaleski, 10.

65. "rege tamen Castelle in omnibus preualente et de regno alterius castra plurima occupante": DRH 7.24, 247.

66. *Alfonso VIII*, #783, 3:374–76 (Apr. 29, 1206).

67. *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116–1230)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #91, 149.

68. *Ibid.*, #92, 151.

69. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:740–41.

70. *Alfonso IX*, #219, 2:303 (Sep. 7, 1207).

71. "omnes redditus et omnia servitia que debeo habere . . . in petito, portatico, calumpniis, fossato, comestionibus, cellario et omnia iura qui ibi ad me pertinent . . . preter monetam quam mihi retineo": *ibid.* See *Alfonso VIII*, 1:740.

72. No tenants are recorded for Castrogonzalo and Castroverde between March 1206 and September 1207. During that time, however, Valencia was held by one Gonzalo Rodríguez: AHN, cód. 1045, p. 85 (Nov. 1, 1206); *CD Monasterio de Gradefes*, ed. Burón Castro, #296, 363 (February 1207). A Gonzalo Rodríguez was listed among the acceptable Castilian tenants in the Treaty of Cabrerros; in both cases, presumably, this was Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón.

73. "Et concedo fidelibus et absolve eos quantum ad hoc ut in omnibus istis supradictis teneantur respondere soli regine domne Berengarie et non mihi in omnibus diebus ipsius regine non obstante quantum ad completionem supradictorum quod positum est in carta pacis, in qua dicitur quod de predictis omnibus mihi debebat respondere": *Alfonso IX*, #219, 2:303–4.

74. See Martínez Sopena, 307.

75. Ibid., 186 n.368.

76. *Alfonso IX*, #219, 2:304.

77. Ibid., 2:305; *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:369. The eight Castilians are Count Fernando (Núñez de Lara), Álvaro Núñez (de Lara), Fernando Álvarez, Guillermo González, Gómez Pérez, Rodrigo Díaz (de Cameros), Pedro Rodríguez, and Nuño Pérez (de Guzmán). The others are Álvaro Gutiérrez and Pedro González “potestas.”

78. *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:369.

79. “Eodem tempore idem donnus Petrus, Compostellanus archiepiscopus IIII, acquisiuit castellum Sancti Pelagii de Luto, de manibus regis Castelle et regine filie illius domne Beringarie, et domini Adefonsi regis Legionis, quod sola beati Jacobi operante gratia factum credimus, cum iam istud castellum esset memorate regine in donationem propter nuptias, et licet supradicti reges in aliis essent discordes in hac donatione tunc concordis facti sunt apostolo mediante”: *Alfonso IX*, #231, 2:320 (Jun. 1, 1208).

80. AC León, #30 (Jun. 27, 1209).

81. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:741–42; *Anales toledanos*, ed. Porres Martín-Cleto, 169. Álvaro Núñez held La Ferra in 1208 and 1209: AHN, Clero, 1730/7 (Mar. 2, 1208); *ibid.*, 1730/8 (May 8, 1209).

82. *Documentos . . . de Santa María la Mayor de Valladolid, Siglo XIII*, comp. Mañeco Villalobos, #6, 31–35 (Feb. 22, 1208). García Pérez appears a second time as “merino of the queen of León” in a reworking of the same agreement dated March 8, 1208: *ibid.*, #7, 36–45.

83. Zurita Nieto in *ibid.*, 35.

84. Rucquoi, 180.

85. Ibid., 164.

86. Martínez Sopena, 325.

87. Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile*, 107, 126.

88. AC León, #30 (Jun. 27, 1209).

89. *Alfonso VIII*, #681, 3:204–8 (Dec. 8, 1199).

90. Alfonso IX's desire to appoint his own candidates to these tenancies was doubtless a measure to restrict the kind of infractions that Castilian tenants had committed elsewhere on the border.

91. “tam Regina quam filii mei ita debent tenere iam dictas villas, siue alcazares, ut numquam inde nec de suis terminis, nec de suis alfozes mihi, nec Regno meo dampnum eueniat, uel guerra, nisi ego abstulero dicte Regine domne B. morabetinos quos ei dedi uel aliquam villam, uel alcazarem de istis tribus. . . . Et ut hoc totum quod dictum est fideliter seruatur, Regina domna B. concedit mihi bona fide, et sine malo ingenio, quod ipsa ita seruabit, et faciet seruari ab illis qui predictas villas, vel alcazares de ea uel de filiis suis tenuerint”: AC León, #30 (Jun. 27, 1209).

92. The treaty includes several clauses to the same effect, and establishes a multi-tiered system of safeguards to ensure that the kings keep the peace, or are severely punished if they do not. Its references to the necessity of destroying castles that have been

built within Berenguela's or Fernando's properties explain why Alfonso IX was so anxious to keep Castile's tenants docile.

93. "Et Ego A. Rex Castelle concedo omnia supradicta sicut superius continentur, et per hoc sum ego pacatus pro filia mea Regina domna B. . . . Et nos ambo Reges concedimus, et iuramus quod fideliter seruabimus, et seruari faciemus omnia que in hac carta continentur, sicut supradictum est. . . . E Ego Regina domna B. concedo quod supradictum est inter me, et domnum A., Regem Legionis, et promitto bona fide quod seruem illud et seruari faciam": AC León, #30 (Jun. 27, 1209).

94. Her previous reign in León offers another example of her sealing a diploma in this unusual context; see Chapter 2.

95. *Alfonso IX*, #256, 2:349–50 (February 1210); *ibid.*, #257, 2:351–52 (Feb. 11, 1210); see *Alfonso VIII*, #861, 3:510–12 (Feb. 25, 1210).

96. See Baquero Moreno, 313.

97. AHN, cód. 1043, núm. 65 (Apr. 22, 1213). Fernando first co-issued and confirmed a Leonese diploma on April 21, 1211: *Alfonso IX*, #271, 2:366–68.

98. "pulcherrimus adolescens": CM 4.91, 331.

99. Rodrigo Pérez had been serving as Alfonso IX's *alférez* until May 1211: *Alfonso IX*, #275, 2:372–74. Pedro Fernández ceases to confirm Castilian diplomas after July 3, 1206 (*Alfonso VIII*, #790, 3:387–88), and reappears in León from November 11, 1211 (*Alfonso IX*, #280, 2:377–9).

100. "Et si fratres templi illa potuerint acquirere aliquo modo, multum placebit mihi": AHN, OO.MM., 568/17 (Apr. 29, 1211; conf. Jan. 28, 1255).

101. *Inocencio III*, #471, 502 (Apr. 5, 1212).

102. CM 4.87, 328.

103. "Rex autem Adefonsus licet esset pro morte tanti filii saucius, ex multitudine exercituum confluencium recepit consolationem": CM 4.89, 329.

104. DRH 7.36, 258. Archbishop Rodrigo, who was present, reports that Alfonso VIII was seized with "inconsolable grief, for he saw himself in him [Fernando] as if he were the mirror of his life" (*luctus inconsolabilis genitori, quia in ipsum tanquam in uite speculum contemplabatur*). According to the CLRC, Leonor was so overcome that she lay down upon her son's body, covering his mouth with hers and grasping his hands, and "strove either to revive him or to die with him" (*nitebatur uel eum uiuificare uel cum eo mori*): CLRC 20, 55. The king and queen left their own testimonials of grief in their donations to Las Huelgas and the Hospital del Rey/de la Reina in Burgos shortly after Fernando's death. On November 28, 1211, Alfonso VIII made a gift to the Hospital while "devoutly commending to the King of Kings the spirit of my dearest firstborn son, don Fernando, whom by the disposition of divine grace I could not have as heir to the throne of my kingdom": *Alfonso VIII*, #887, 3:553. The next day, he granted property to Las Huelgas: "Whereas by the disposition of divine clemency I, Alfonso, by the grace of God king of Castile and Toledo, was not permitted to have our dearest son don Fernando (may his soul merit the enjoyment of eternal rest) as successor to our kingdom, so that he might acquire the celestial kingdom for himself, we can and must and will strive in every way

possible so that his devotion and obedience, which he always sought to show to us and to all people with all his heart, may gain in heaven the worthy recompense that it was not permitted to have on earth": *ibid.*, #888, 3:555.

105. See Stafford, "Portrayal," 151.

106. CLRC 20, 56. For a more detailed examination of Berenguela's role as her brother's chief mourner, see Shadis, *Berenguela*, 154–55.

107. "excellētissima sorore sua Berengaria regina . . . impendente liberaliter et decenter officia funeris et honoris, gemitus et doloris; ubi uirtutum eius sic claruit plenitudo, ut eius prudentia deuoti sexus excederat pietatem et helemosinarum largitio principum largitatem. Curialitatis etiam pudica modestia inconsolabili luctui solacia procabatur, ut exinde fame eius dulcorata suauitas in augmentum cresceret et dulcorem": DRH 7.36, 258.

108. CLRC 20, 56.

109. Theresa Vann has argued that the letter purportedly written by Berenguela to her sister Blanche of Castile, which describes the battle and their father's heroic role in it, does not date from 1212. Instead, it is a commemorative text commissioned later in the thirteenth century, probably by one of Berenguela's Francophone relatives rather than by the queen herself. See Vann, "'Our father.'" Cf. Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile*, 129–33; Hernández, "La corte de Fernando III," 107–10; G. Martin, "Régner sans régner," 39.

110. CM 4.91, 330–31.

111. Cf. *Alfonso IX*, 1:146; *Alfonso VIII*, 1:748.

112. CM 4.90, 330; CLRC 25, 63; DRH 8.12, 276.

113. *Alfonso VIII*, #900, 3:576 (Nov. 11, [1212]).

114. No diploma for this agreement survives, but its terms are recorded by the usually reliable Lucas of Tuy: CM 4.91, 331. Among the castles destroyed he lists "the castle of the Jews near León" (*Iudeorum castrum iuxta Legionem*), which may refer to Castro de los Judíos de Mayorga.

115. Fernando had fared even worse than his mother, losing thirteen of the thirty-one castles that he had possessed after the Treaty of Valladolid; some of these were among the castles in which Berenguela had rents.

116. His last co-issued diploma was on April 22, 1213: AHN, cód. 1043, núm. 65. Alfonso VIII was in the Tierra de Campos in late July and early August: AHN, Clero, 3430/7 (Jul. 28, 1213); *Alfonso VIII*, #908–9, 3:589–92 (Jul. 31 and Aug. 8, 1213). Alfonso IX was also within easy range of the border in early July, at Zamora: *Alfonso IX*, #296, 2:395–96 (Jul. 8, 1213).

117. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:751.

118. For Valencia, see AHN, Clero, 994/2 (1212; *possidens*); *ibid.*, 994/3 (1212; *possidens*); and *ibid.*, 826/12 (July 1214; *dominans*). For Rueda, see *CD Monasterio de Gradefes*, ed. Burón Castro, #308, 378 (May 1210: *dominans in*); *ibid.*, #319, 390 (June 1211: *dominans in*); *ibid.*, #328, 398 (1212: *dominans*). For Villalpando, see AHN, Clero, 910/11 (1211; *existens domina*); *ibid.*, 3550/19 (Dec. 14, 1211; *existens domina*); *ibid.*, 3551/1 (Jan. 21, 1213; *existens domina*); *ibid.*, 3551/2–3 (both Feb. 7, 1213; *existens domina*). For the meanings of *dominium* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Van Engen, 215–18.

119. The charter is altogether rather remarkably dated. It records a donation by the archpriest of Villalpando to San Isidoro de León, and states that it was made “During the reign of Queen doña Berenguela with her son Infante don Fernando. García Ordóñez holding Villalpando from the hand of Queen doña Berenguela and of her son Infante don Fernando” (*Regnante regina dompna Berengaria cum filio suo infante dompno Fernando. Garsia Ordonii tenente Uilla Alpando de manu regine dompne Berengarie et filii sui infantici domni Fernandi*): *Patrimonio cultural de San Isidoro*, ed. Martín López, #194, 226–27 (1212).

120. *CD Monasterio de Gradefes*, ed. Burón Castro, #320, 391 (August 1211).

121. AHN, Clero, 826/12.

122. Alfonso IX had given her “all rents and all services . . . except the castles which should remain in fealty as it is set out in the peace charter made between me and the king of Castile,” that is, the Treaty of Cabrerros: *Alfonso IX*, #219, 2:303.

123. Her tenant in Mota was Gutierre Fernández de *Pinna*: AHN, Clero, 826/12 (July 1214).

124. He is almost certainly the same Muño Rodríguez who had served as Alfonso IX’s *alférez* during Berenguela’s marriage and had held Castroverde at the same time. He had resumed its tenancy by 1208 at the latest: *Alfonso IX*, #163, 2:232 (1202?); AHN, Clero, 3565/3 (Sep. 2, 1208); *Tumbo . . . de San Martín de Castañeda*, ed. Rodríguez González, #111, 164 (April 1212).

125. “De cuius morte ualde doluit Legionensis rex”: CM 4.91, 331.

126. “proposuerat regnum et filium impuberem et uxorem et filias fidei predicti uasalli nobilis et fidelis commictere, et omnia in manu eius et potestate dimictere, certam gerens fiduciam quod ipse cuncta fideliter ministraret. . . . Tanta igitur spe . . . frustratus rex gloriosus doluit ultra modum”: CLRC 28, 68.

127. Nobles had occupied the regency as recently as Alfonso VIII’s own (very turbulent) minority. See Vones-Liebenstein, 13, 17–18; Poulet, 109.

128. “in presencia Alienor uxoris sue karissime et regine Berengarie filie sue dulcissime”: DRH 8.15, 280.

CHAPTER 4. A FAILED REGENCY, 1214–1217

1. Stafford, “Portrayal,” 164; Parsons, “Family, Sex, and Power,” 8.

2. Stafford, *Queens*, 149.

3. The CLRC says she was suffering from a quartan fever: CLRC 28, 68–69; DRH 8.15, 280.

4. “fere dilaceratione et lacrimis se extinxit”: DRH 8.15, 280.

5. “Igitur gloriosi regis corpore magnifice et honorifice tradito sepulture, nobilis uxor eius, regina domina Alienor, tanti uiri solatio destituta, pre dolore et angustia spiritus mortem habens in desiderio, incidit continuo in lectum egritudinis”: CLRC 28, 69.

6. “ante tamen quam moreretur uices suas commisit domine Berengarie, regine Legionis, filie sue, tam quoad regni et regis paruuli donni Henrici regimen quam quoad omnia que ad ipsam facere pertinebant”: *Alfonso VIII*, #970, 3:676. See also CLRC 31, 73.

7. “hoc fecimus cum consilio domine Berengarie, regine Legionis et Gallecie, cui mater sua regina domina Allionoris dimisit regnum et filium et omnia regni iura, sicut dominus rex bone memorie dimiserit ipsi Allionori regine”: AHN, Clero, 1730/11. The document is dated only to 1214, but the fact that Leonor had already died dates it to the last two months of that year.

8. “cum approbacione et consensu domine Berengarie, regine Legionis”: *Alfonso VIII*, #970, 3:675–76.

9. *Ibid.*, #971, 3:677–78.

10. See *Alfonso VIII*, vol. 2. Berenguela also goes unnamed in the dating formulas of charters issued by individuals or religious institutions during this time; they speak only of “the reign of King don Enrique.” Such legal fictions were common in other Western European kingdoms of the same period: see Vones-Liebenstein, 14; Poulet, 109.

11. “Post mortem uero matris, regina domina Berengaria fratrem suum Henricum habuit in tutelam sua et curam regni gessit cum Archiepiscopo Toletano et episcopo Palentino per tres menses uel paulo plus.

“Magnates autem quidam, indignati, ceperunt machinari et quedam inuenire figmenta, per que, rege puero subducto de potestate et curia sororis et prelatorum, ipsi magnarentur in regno pro sua uoluntate”: CLRC 31, 73.

12. Doubleday, 52.

13. See Hernández, “La hora de don Rodrigo,” 20.

14. DRH 9.1, 282.

15. AHN, cód. 996, f. 35r.

16. See Bedos-Rezak, 64.

17. “de consensu et approbatione dominae Berengariae illustris Legionis reginae felicissimae memoriae, [sic] praedicti domini Alfonsi regis Castellae filiae, cui bonae memoriae regina Alienor mater sua procuracionem regni commiserat”: *Alfonso VIII*, #976, 3:683–85 (Jan. 18, 1215).

18. “sollers regina Berengaria . . . animo gratanti concessit, set timens insolencias que uenerunt, fecit iurare comitem Aluarum et magnates ut sine ipsius regine consilio nec aliquibus terram auferrent nec aliquibus terram darent nec uicinis regibus guerram mouerent nec multam . . . imponderent in aliqua regni parte; et iuramento et hominio in manu Roderici Toletani pontificis firmauerunt, et si contrarium facerent, prodicionis infamia tenerentur. Set quia regina propter inopportunitates militum et maiorum tedio erat affecta, timebat ne regnum in sui custodia turbaretur, et ideo comiti Aluaro dedit puerum condicionibus supradictis”: DRH 9.1, 281–82. Rodrigo mistakenly refers to all of the Núñez de Lara brothers as counts, although in early 1215 this honor had only been obtained by the eldest, Fernando.

19. G. Martin, “Négociation,” 12.

20. The fact that the magnates did homage “upon the hand of Archbishop Rodrigo” does not indicate a derogation of Berenguela’s authority. In his will of 1210, Sancho I of Portugal tried to ensure that his son and heir, Afonso, would carry out his wishes in exactly the same way—by having Afonso not only do homage to Sancho himself but also

swear fealty “on the hands of” a selection of Portuguese ecclesiastics. As Afonso attests, “de hoc feci hominium in manibus patris mei et iuravi in manibus Bracarensis electi et Colimbrensis episcopi et abbatis Alcupacie quod omnia ista compleam et attendam”: *Documentos de D. Sancho*, ed. Azevedo, Avelino de Jesus da Costa, and Rodrigues Pereira, #194, 300 (October 1210). Juan of Osma says that Álvaro did homage to Berenguela herself; see note 21.

21. “Hoc totum iuravit Aluarus Nunnii, et super hiis fecit omagium domine regine. Quod utrum tenuerit, ipse uideret”: CLRC 31, 73.

22. As Doubleday (4) observes, even many modern historians write from the perspective of the monarchy, and have therefore been influenced by royal propaganda against the nobility.

23. *Alfonso VIII*, #978, 3:688–89 (February 1215); *ibid.*, #977, 3:687 (Jan. 22, 1215).

24. Hernández Segura, 12–13.

25. “vinieron ante ella seyendo y el rey don Enrrique”: *Crónica de la población de Ávila*, ed. Hernández Segura, 38–39.

26. “E señora, los que dizen que la guerra non se podríe bien mantener, porque nuestro señor es niño, dizen sus voluntades, ca él a muchos de buenos vassallos para consejarle e para defender la tierra que su padre dexó. . . . E señora, señaladamente vos digo del conçejo de Avila que quanta tierra e quantos castillos mantovimos e defendimos en tiempo del rey don Alfonso, vuestro padre, a todo nos obligamos de tenerlo e defenderlo; e si más nos dierdes, más defenderemos.”

“E la reyna Berenguela, que dé Dios parayso, como quier que de otra guissa la consejaron algunos, a este consejo se atovo ella”: *ibid.*, 39.

27. AHN, cód. 976, f. 77r–v (Mar. 14, 1215). Villanueva was held by Alfonso VIII in 1194, when he pledged it as security that he would keep the terms of the Treaty of Tordehumos. How it came into Berenguela’s possession is not clear.

28. Alfonso IX’s surviving diplomas put him in Benavente on March 7 and in Astorga on March 22: *Alfonso IX*, #317–18, 2:421–24.

29. Listing magnates’ tenancies in royal documents was, by now, chiefly a Leonese practice. But the failure to include any Castilian *offices* (for Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón and Álvaro Núñez, e.g., as majordomo and *alférez*) is unusual. However, that omission may originate with the later copyist of this diploma, rather than with the original.

30. Cf. Hilda Grassotti’s reconstruction of these events in *Don Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada*, 219–24, and Shadis’s in *Berenguela*, 91.

31. *Alfonso VIII*, #981, 3:693–95.

32. *Ibid.*, #976–98, 3:683–89 (Jan. 18, Jan. 22, Feb. 15, 1215).

33. *Ibid.*, #983, 695–97 (Apr. 28, 1215); AHN, cód. 1046, pp. 62–63 (May 1, 1215).

34. In this sequence, Count Fernando was followed in the list by Lope Díaz de Haro and Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros, with Gonzalo Núñez coming sixth: *Liber de privilegios de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén*, ed. Ayala Martínez, #215, 399–400; *Alfonso VIII*, #984, 3:699–700 (Jun. 18, 1215) ff.

35. The first securely dated appearance of Gonzalo Núñez as a count is March 6, 1216: *Alfonso VIII*, #999, 3:719–21.

36. AHN, Clero, 1745/10.

37. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:222–23, 363. Cf. AHN, Clero, 911/8 (May 1, 1215), where the merino mayor is correctly identified and no one is named as alferez.

38. From at least April 21, 1215, Enrique's chancellor was one Rodrigo Rodríguez: *Alfonso VIII*, #981, 3:695. He has occasionally been identified with Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón (see, e.g., Shadis, *Berenguela*, 91–92), but this is unlikely; the post of chancellor was held by trained clerics, not by lay magnates. Moreover, Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón confirms many of the diplomas that name Rodrigo Rodríguez as chancellor, with no indication in any case that the scribe is speaking of the same person.

39. *Alfonso VIII*, #981, 3:693–95 (Apr. 21, 1215; Ávila); *ibid.*, #982, 695–97 (Apr. 28, 1215; Segovia); Doubleday, 53; *Alfonso VIII*, 1:224.

40. *Alfonso VIII*, #981, 3:693–95 (Apr. 21, 1215); *ibid.*, #982, 695–97 (Apr. 28, 1215).

41. AHN, Clero, 1692/1. For a number of years before this, the tenancy had been held jointly by Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón and Alfonso Téllez de Meneses.

42. *Ibid.*, 911/1. Their control of the tenancy of Carrión in the years between 1205 and 1214 is recorded in a series of documents, most of which can be found in *ibid.*, 909–10. Subsequent information on this tenancy is lacking until February 8, 1218, when Gonzalo and Rodrigo were again in possession: *ibid.*, 911/16.

Carrión—like Saldaña, another Girón stronghold—had been part of Queen Leonor's arras. Was the Girón's service to Berenguela an extension of their service to the previous queen?

43. *Ibid.*, 1692/10 (Oct. 15, 1217); *ibid.*, 283/2 (Nov. 1, 1220); AHN, cód. 994, f. 82v (Mar. 23, 1221). Not much is known about Fernando Ladrón, but documents of the 1220s indicate that he had family and interests in Berenguela's stronghold of Burgos: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116–1230)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #194, 290–91 (October 1224); *ibid.*, #190, 286–87 (April 1224).

44. For the construction of discourse in royal diplomas, see Moore, 454.

45. The agreement between the constellation of court officers in Rodrigo Rodríguez's charter and the actual makeup of the court in the 1220s leaves a bare possibility that this charter is a forgery. Such a forgery might have been made in the 1220s—the paleography of the document makes any much later date unlikely—by a scribe who, knowing that Berenguela was her brother's regent in 1215, merely assumed that the court officers of her regency would have been identical to the court officers of her and her son's reign. If so, of course, the forger made a major error in listing Fernando Ladrón, rather than his predecessor Gonzalo Pérez de Arnales, as merino mayor; and it is difficult to imagine why he would not have listed more of the prominent “members of the king's court” as witnesses in place of the handful of minor luminaries who appear. But despite its anomalies of content, the physical document gives no suggestion of fraud, and its date has been generally accepted as genuine. Even González, who realized that the language of the charter required some explanation, did not doubt that it had been written in April 1215. Neither should we. The events of spring 1215 provide ample context to understand this charter's problematic contents.

46. “Educto rege de potestate regine, post non multos dies facta est diuisio inter barones regni, quibusdam adherentibus Aluaro Nunii, scilicet Goncaluo Roderici et fratribus suis et aliis multis, quibusdam uero inter se contra istos pacta firmissima inc[. . .]”: CLRC 32, 73. The edited text marks a lacuna here. The DRH also attests that the Girón brothers initially sided with Álvaro Núñez de Lara: 9.1, 282.

47. Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón, Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón, and Suero Téllez de Meneses all confirmed Enrique’s diploma of April 21: *Alfonso VIII*, #981, 3:693–95.

48. DRH 9.2, 282. Cf. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:227.

49. “maior pars uaronum consensit”: CLRC 31, 73; PCG 1025, 2:710a.

50. AHN, Clero, 911/11 (Apr. 19, 1216). Similar examples are *ibid.*, 911/13 (Mar. 11, 1217), and *ibid.*, 911/15 (1217).

51. *Alfonso IX*, 1:163.

52. See *Honorio III*, #77, 63–64 (Aug. 8, 1217).

53. *Alfonso IX*, 1:163.

54. Torres Sevilla-Quiñones de León, 233.

55. *Alfonso IX*, 1:163; *Alfonso VIII*, 1:228.

56. DRH 9.2, 283.

57. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:228. This is the more remarkable considering that Mafalda and Enrique were together for nearly a year. She was, however, recognized along with Enrique in the dating formula of at least one individual charter: *CD Monasterio de Gradefes*, ed. Burón Castro, #360, 431–32 (March 1217—perhaps an error for 1216).

58. Honorius III later confirmed her absolution at her request; even so, he addressed her as “queen of Castile”: *Honorio III*, #103, 84 (Nov. 25, 1217). The CLRC says that the separation took place at Miranda (CLRC 32, 74), suggesting that it occurred around June 1, 1216, when Enrique issued a diploma from Miranda del Ebro: *Alfonso VIII*, #1001, 3:723–24; O’Callaghan, *Latin Chronicle*, 70 n.4.

59. AHN, Clero, 1431/2.

60. *Alfonso VIII*, #1005, 3:730–32.

61. CLRC 32, 74. Juan González is not easily identifiable among Enrique’s former courtiers; perhaps he was the Leonese noble who acted as guarantor in Alfonso IX’s treaty with Castile (see above). See also DRH 9.2, 282.

62. “regni exterminio condolentes . . . et regine Berengarie prudenciam adeuntes, humiliter supplicarunt ut regni miseriis condoleret”: DRH 9.2, 282.

63. AHN, Clero, 3436/8 (Aug. 6, 1216; the document is missing the year, but the AHN catalogue rightly places it in 1216 on the basis of its confirmation list); *Alfonso VIII*, #1007, 3:733–34 (Oct. 4, 1216).

64. *Ibid.*, #1003, 3:726–27 (Jul. 12, 1216); AHN, Clero, 3439/10 ([July] 1216); *ibid.*, 3439/9 (Jul. 14, 1216).

65. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:231 n.319.

66. *Alfonso IX*, #339, 2:444–45 (Aug. 20, 1216).

67. They may even have briefly replaced him; the Latin *filiis meis* gives no clue to the gender of the children in question. But there is little doubt that Alfonso IX was

referring to Sancha and/or Dulce, rather than to any of his other children with Berenguela. None of Berenguela's children besides Fernando were ever put forward as heir, and they never appeared in their father's diplomas. Sancha and Dulce, however, were heirs-apparent on more than one occasion and co-issued diplomas accordingly.

68. Sancha and Dulce's increasing status in León is also suggested by Pope Honorius III's reception of both infantas, and their mother Teresa, under the Holy See's protection on November 3, 1216. The privilege came in response to Teresa's request for such protection, which may well have arisen from Alfonso IX's decision to establish Sancha and Dulce as possible heirs: *Honorio III*, #6, 5.

69. *Alfonso VIII*, #1008, 3:734–36.

70. *Ibid.*, #1009, 3:736–38. The Díaz (whose first name is either missing or illegible) could be Lope Díaz de Haro, as González suggests. But since the magnates' names do not appear in their usual order—Count Fernando, for example, appears fifth instead of third—it is also possible that this is Álvaro Díaz de Cameros, whose name is usually listed after that of his brother Rodrigo. Lope Díaz de Haro does not appear in the next of Enrique's known diplomas, but Álvaro Díaz de Cameros does: *ibid.*, #1010, 3:738–40 (Feb. 3, 1217).

71. *Alfonso VIII*, 1:233.

72. In addition to lesser properties, they were to receive the castles of Allariz, Araujo, Asperelo, Burgo de Ribadavia, Cabreira de Baronceli, Candrei, Celme, Lobanzana, Milmanda, Portela de San Juan, Ribera, San Juan de la Barra, and Santa Cruz; as well as Alcántara, Bayona, La Coruña, Morgadanes, San Martín de los Ladrões, Sanjurjo, Traba, and all the king's possessions in Limia, except for Aguilar de Mola and Aguilar de Pedraio. They would also inherit their mother's Leonese possessions when she died: *Alfonso IX*, #342, 2:448–51 (Jan. 6, 1217).

73. *Ibid.*, 1:170; Estepa Díez, "Curia y Cortes," 71.

74. AHN, cód. 976, f. 76r (Jul. 28, 1206).

75. AHN, Clero, 1326H/3 bis (Aug. 25, 1216). Unfortunately, no such data are available for Valcarcel. Benavente's tenancy was chiefly in the hands of Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna between 1206 and 1217, but he is never said to hold the town on behalf of either Teresa or Berenguela.

76. *Honorio III*, #73, 59 (Jul. 31, 1217).

77. DRH 9.3, 283.

78. "Erat [Berengaria] enim sollicita, eo quod a comite Aluaro negligencius seruabatur. Et . . . comes Aluarius . . . fecit scribi litteras imposture et falso sigillo regine nobilis intercludi, in quibus continebatur quod regina nobilis scribebat aliquibus de consilio magnatorum de Campis, ut cum toxico sibi misso fratri suo exiciale poculum propinarent": *ibid.*

79. CLRC 32, 75.

80. Martínez Sopena, 15.

81. *Alfonso VIII*, #1009, 3:736–38.

82. Doubleday, 56.

83. CLRC 32, 75.
84. Ibid.
85. Stafford, "Portrayal," 145; see also Shadis, *Berenguela*, 94.
86. CLRC 32, 75; cf. DRH 9.2, 282. The PCG suggests that Álvaro was plotting to kidnap Leonor: PCG 1026, 2:710b.
87. CLRC 32, 75; DRH 9.3, 284.
88. Relatives of the Lara, they survived the first purge; but by February 17 both Cameros brothers were gone from Enrique's court: *Alfonso VIII*, #1011, 3:740–41.
89. Fernando last appears in an intitutional on February 13, 1217: *Alfonso IX*, #343, 2:452. Regrettably, the only two surviving Leonese diplomas between that date and late May of the same year are writs, which the reigning monarch rarely co-issued with a spouse or children.
90. *Alfonso VIII*, #1013, 3:743.
91. "pro multis et gratis seruitiis que michi fideliter exhibuistis et cotidie exhibere non cessatis et per hominibus et rebus aliis que in seruitio meo ammisistis et quibusdam grauissimis destructionibus quas in acquisitione regni mei cum regnare ab aduersariis impediabar pro me sustinuistis": AHN, Clero, 1049/6 (May 17, 1217).
92. "Regina autem et sui nobiles . . . nesciebant quid agerent, eo quod in exercitum rege presente non poterant insilire nec illatas iniurias sustinere": DRH 9.4, 284. The CLRC concurs: 32, 76.
93. CLRC 32, 76; see also DRH 9.2, 282.
94. "minus prouide custoditus": DRH 9.4, 284.
95. See Torres López, 487.
96. CLRC 32, 76; DRH 9.4, 284.
97. See, e.g., Doubleday, 55–56.
98. The CLRC reports that Enrique died in June: CLRC 32, 76. The *Libro de óbitos de Aguilar de Campóo* and the *Anales toledanos* both specify June 6: *Alfonso VIII*, 1:238 n.340; *Alfonso IX*, 1:173; *Anales toledanos*, ed. Hernández Segura, 1:186.
99. *Alfonso IX*, #346, 2:453–55 (May 28, 1217); *ibid.*, #347, 2:455–56 (May 29, 1217). In both documents, Álvaro is represented by a proxy, Pedro Yáñez Marino. Most likely, Pedro Yáñez was fulfilling Álvaro's functions as majordomo while Álvaro himself remained in Castile, waiting to learn the outcome of Enrique's injury. But the fact that Alfonso IX's alférez, Sancho Fernández, was also assigned a proxy in these two diplomas is sufficient assurance that Álvaro Núñez was formally a member of the Leonese court. After all, Sancho Fernández had been alférez to his half-brother for years.
100. CLRC 33, 76.
101. Ibid.
102. "uacabat regnum": CLRC 34, 78.
103. CLRC 33, 77.
104. *Fernando III*, 1:236; DRH 9.4, 285; CLRC 33, 77.
105. DRH 9.4, 285; *Fernando III*, 1:237.
106. CLRC 34, 77. The DRH suggests that Berenguela learned of the meeting only after she had returned to Valladolid from Coca: 9.5, 285.

107. See Powers, *A Society Organized for War*.

108. “Ibidem et intimatum est eis quod non reciperent eos Segouienses, nec alii Extremadurani. Insinuatum est insuper eis quod, nisi sibi cauerent, Sancius Fernandi, frater regis Legionis, cum multitudine militum insequeretur eos ut eis noceret et eos, si posset, caperet”: CLRC 34, 77. My translation is based on *Latin Chronicle* 34, 75. See also DRH 9.4, 285.

109. CLRC 35, 78; *Alfonso IX*, 1:177.

110. A charter issued then was dated “In the reign of King Fernando in Toledo and Castile, and of his mother doña Berenguela”: *Documentos de . . . S. María la Mayor de Valladolid*, ed. Mañueco Villalobos, #10, 55–56.

111. DRH 9.5, 286; CLRC 35, 78.

112. “diuersi diuersa sentirent”: CLRC 35, 78.

113. “Exiens igitur regina nobilis cum filiis suis Fernando et Alfonso, et cum epis-copis, scilicet Burgense et Palentino et cum aliis uiris religiosis et cum uaronibus, qui ei fauebant, uenit ad predictum locum, ubi multitudo gentium expectabat aduentum ipsius. Vnus igitur, loquens pro omnibus cunctis in idipsum consentientibus, ex persona popu-lorum recognouit regnum Castelle deberi de iure regine domine Berengarie et quod eam omnes recognoscebant dominam et reginam regni Castelle. Verumptamen supplicauerunt omnes unanimiter ut regnum, quod suum erat iure proprietatis, concederet filio suo mai-ori, scilicet domino Fernando, quia, cum ipsa femina esset, labores regiminis regni tolerare non posset.

“Ipsa uero, uidens quod ardenti desiderio concupierat, petitis gratanter annuit et filio supradicto regnum concessit. Clamatum est ab omnibus clamore ualido: Viua rex. Exinde cum ingenti leticia uenerunt omnes ad ecclesiam Sancte Marie, et ibidem Deo gratias agentes, fecerunt omagium manuale omnes qui aderant, tam magnates quam populi ciui-tatum et aliarum uillarum, regi domino Fernando, et sic mater cum honore et ingenti gaudio reuersa est ad palacium patris sui”: CLRC 35, 78–79. My translation is based on *Latin Chronicle* 35, 76–77.

114. “cum ad Vallem Oleti comuniter conuenissent, ibidem tam Extremorum Dorii pociores, qui pro omnibus uenerant, quam etiam magnates et milites Castellani comuni consensu regnum Castelle fidelitate debita regine nobili optulerunt. Ipsi enim decedenti-bus filiis, cum esset inter filias primogenita, regni successio debebatur et hoc ipsum patris priuilegio probabatur, quod in armario Burgensis ecclesie seruabatur; et etiam totum reg-num, antequam rex haberet filium, bis iuramento et hominio hoc firmarat. Ipsa autem intra fines pudicicie et modestie supra omnes mundi dominas se coartans, regnum sibi noluit retinere. . . . et ibidem filio regnum tradens, infans Fernandus, de quo diximus, omnibus aprobantibus ad ecclesiam sancte Marie ducitur et ibidem ad regni solium sublimatur. . . . Et ibidem omnes ei fecerunt hominium et fidelitatem regi debitam iura-uerunt, et sic honore regio ad regale palacium est reductus”: DRH 9.5, 285–86.

115. AC Burgos, vol. 17, f. 434 (Apr. 23, 1188).

116. Nieto Soria, 39–40; cf. G. Martin, “Régner sans régner,” 14–16. Martin never-theless notes that neither account should be taken as literally true.

117. Huneycutt, "Female Succession," 191–92, 196.
118. *Alfonso VIII*, #499, 2:861 (Apr. 23, 1188). See Chapter 1.
119. Cf. Nieto Soria, 40.
120. The age of majority for Castilian kings was 14: Dillard, 108; G. Martin, "Négociation," 4; Martínez Díez, 133, 137.
121. "ell infante don Fernando era ya alçado rey: ca seyendo el en Otiello, luego que la reyna donna Berenguella et aquellos sus grandes buenos omnes que con ella tenien et andauan, luego que fueron çiertos de la muerte del rey don Henrrique, touieron por bien todos que alçassen rey all infante don Fernando, et fue fecho assi; et alli luego en Otiello le alçaron rey, et llamaron con el 'real!'; et dalli mouieron con el por rey . . . et todas sus cosas fazien con el como con su rey": PCG 1028, 2:713a.
122. CLRC 31, 78. Cf. Nieto Soria, 40. The same ceremony had been performed at the Curia of Carrión to mark Berenguela and Conrad as Castile's heirs; it is not clear why, or whether, it had not been performed for Enrique before Alfonso VIII died.
123. See Nicholas, 88.
124. See also Shadis, *Berenguela*, 14–15, 121.
125. See *ibid.*, 16.
126. "Et ibi uenerunt ad eam ex Secobia et Abula et aliis oppidis Extremorum Dorii milites copiosi conciliorum suorum seruicia offerentes": DRH 9.6, 286–87.
127. CLRC 34, 77–78.
128. CLRC 35, 78.
129. DRH 9.5, 286; CLRC 36, 79.
130. *Fernando III*, 1:240; *Alfonso IX*, 1:178.
131. *Ibid.*, 1:176–77.
132. DRH 9.5, 286; CLRC 36, 79; *Fernando III*, 1:240.
133. CLRC 36, 79.
134. *Fernando III*, 1:130.
135. CLRC 36, 79; DRH 9.6, 286–87.
136. *Fernando III*, 1:240. The CLRC makes it clear that these knights had come to fight for both Fernando III and Berenguela, reporting that they were there "ad seruicium regis et regine": CLRC 36, 79.
137. DRH 9.5, 286.
138. DRH 9.6, 287; CLRC 36, 79–80.
139. DRH 9.6, 287; CLRC 37, 80. See Shadis, *Berenguela*, 157.
140. CLRC 37, 80.
141. "cum procesione solempni cum honore magno et gaudio infinito. Liberauerat enim Dominus Deus quasi miraculose ciuitatem Burgensem de manibus inimicorum suorum, et restituit eam uere et naturali domine": *ibid.* The DRH expresses identical sentiments: 9.6, 287. For Archbishop Rodrigo's emphasis on "natural" lordship, see G. Martin, "Régner sans régner," 7.
142. DRH 9.7, 287; CLRC 37, 80.
143. Berenguela's participation in this and other military campaigns, either as a war-leader or advisor, sets her in the increasingly well recognized context of medieval women

who took part in war. Unlike many other women, she did this even though she had a fully capable male authority figure at her side. Even though the chroniclers do not claim that she wore armor, carried a sword, or otherwise “fought” in the most literal sense, her involvement fit contemporary expectations of a military leader. See Nicholson, 343–47.

144. *Fernando III*, 1:243; CLRC 38, 80–81; DRH 9.7, 287–88.

145. “appropinquantes ei retinuerunt ipsum et de equo precipitauerunt eum in lutum—tunc enim pluerat—et sic inuolutum ceno captiuum ante dominam reginam adduxerunt. Videns autem domina regina inimicum suum capitalem, qui tot et tanta mala intulerat regine et illis, qui eam diligebant, gratias egit Altissimo, quantascumque potuit, pro tanti beneficio sibi collato”: CLRC 38, 81.

146. “Set cum predicti milites aduenissent, comes Aluarus de equo descendit et iacens in terra clipeo se optexit. Set illi manibus eum trahentes, captum . . . regi et regine nobili presentarunt. Et qui multos offenderat, qui nulli pepercerat, qui naturali domine ius dominii abnegarat, diuino iudicio nunc prostratus, suorum militum et fratrum intuentium auxilio destitutus, capitur inglorius et confusus. Tunc regina nobilis gaudio et lacrimis Deum laudans, diu graciaram institit actioni, quod inimicum suum et regni et filii sibi tradidit tam facili captione”: DRH 9.7, 288.

147. DRH 9.8, 288.

148. “E otro día de mañana fizolos ayuntar la reyna todos ante sí. E mandó adozir y al conde don Alvaro que tenía en la prisión. E quando le pararon ante ella fue él muy desmentado que le mandaríe matar. E levantóse Muño Matheos de Avila, e dixo así: ‘Señora, el conde don Alvaro se levantó contra vos; e quiso Dios e la vuestra buena ventura e el derecho que teníedes, que le oviestes a prender. Pero rogamos vos e pedimos merçed que non catedes al yerro que el conde fizo, mas que catedes a cómo sodes la mejor señora del mundo e hija del mejor señor que en el mundo ovo . . . e quel ayades merçed, ca como quier que en esto vos desirvió, otras cossas acaesçerán si Dios quisiere en que vos sirva él e su linaje. Pero señora, desta guisa sea la merçed, que vos dé él, e todos los que de su ayuda son, los castillos e fortalezas que tienen’”: *Crónica de la población de Ávila*, ed. Hernández Segura, 40.

149. “Gradesco yo a Dios la buena andança que me dio, e a vos, todos los míos vasallos, que lealmente me ayudastes. E si Dios quisiere, don Ferrando e yo vos faremos por ello mucho bien e mucha merçed, e al conde yo le faré merçed, e más mesurado deviera ser de levantarse contra mí”: *ibid.*

150. DRH 9.8, 289; CLRC 38, 81.

151. DRH 9.8, 289; CLRC 38, 81–82.

152. O’Callaghan, *Latin Chronicle*, 81 n.8.

153. *Alfonso IX*, #350, 2:458.

154. *Ibid.*, 2:459.

CHAPTER 5. QUEEN OF CASTILE, 1217–1230

1. *Fernando III*, 1:8.

2. G. Martin, “Négociation,” 21–23; *Documentos de Gregorio IX*, ed. Domínguez Sánchez, #418, 355.

3. Doubleday, 63.
4. See Cheyette, 25.
5. See Ferrante, 11; Linehan, “On Further Thought,” 421.
6. “Regnante rege don fernando et mater eius regina donna berenguila in toledo et in castella”: AHN, Clero, 1653/17.
7. “regine Castelle domine Berengarie”: *Alfonso IX*, #366, 2:479 (Aug. 26, 1218).
8. “rex Fernandus regnum optinuit pacifice et quiete, regina nobili omnia disponente, que adeo filium sollicito educauit, ut regnum et patriam iuxta morem aui sui nobilis Aldefonsi”: DRH 9.10, 290.
9. O’Callaghan, “Many Roles,” 24.
10. “Etenim ita obediebat prudentissime Berengarie regine matri sue, quamuis esset regni culmine sublimatus, ac si esset puer humillimus sub ferula magistrali”: CM 93, 332.
11. Ibid.
12. On the gendered implications of Lucas’s metaphor, see Shadis, *Berenguela*, 19.
13. “ego Ferrandus, Dei gratia rex Castelle et Toleti . . . ex assensu, beneplacito et mandato domne regine genitricis mee, facio cartam”: *Fernando III*, #2, 2:8 (Sep. 6, 1217).
14. Its last known appearance comes on December 2, 1217: AHN, Clero, 352/7.
15. See, e.g., *Alfonso VIII*, #51, 2:93–94 (November 1159); *ibid.*, #977–1015, 3:685–747 (Jan. 22, 1215 to May 17, 1217).
16. See, e.g., *Fernando III*, #6, 2:12–13 (Nov. 26, 1217).
17. AHN, Clero, 1730/11 (November–December 1214); *Alfonso VIII*, #970, 3:675–76 (Nov. 18, 1214); *ibid.*, #976, 3:683–85 (Jan. 18, 1215).
18. Berenguela’s other grandfather, Henry II of England, had done the same thing with his son Henry, known for that reason as the Young King.
19. See, e.g., *Alfonso VIII*, #11, 2:24 (Jul. 23, 1153).
20. Huneycutt, “Female Succession,” 199.
21. Hivergneaux, 57.
22. Collins, 85–89.
23. Cited in *ibid.*, 86.
24. “Anno secundo domina regina Berengaria, cuius intencio tota et desiderium summum erat honorem filii modis omnibus procurare, cepit tractare de queranda uxore filio suo. Sed, cum diuersi diuersa sentirent, placuit predicte regine de illius matrimonio tractare que sibi uidebatur in tota christianitate precellere ceteris in generis nobilitate”: CLRC 40, 82.
25. Shadis, “Berenguela of Castile’s Political Motherhood,” 338.
26. “Set quia indecens erat ut tam magnus princeps extraordinariis petulantiis traheretur, mater sua, que semper uoluit eum ab illicitis custodire, procata est ei uxorem nomine Beatricem”: DRH 9.10, 290.
27. Shadis, “Berenguela of Castile’s Political Motherhood,” 340–41. For further discussion of Berenguela’s concern over Fernando’s chastity, see Shadis, *Berenguela*, 107.
28. Cf. Nieto Soria on chroniclers’ tendency to do this generally: “Monarquía fundacional,” 58.

29. *Fernando III*, #136, 2:164 (Jun. 22, 1221).
30. CLRC 40, 83; DRH 9.10, 291.
31. Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 391, 393, 430.
32. “ipse rex suscepto gladio ab altari manu propria se accinxit cingulo militari,” reports the DRH (9.10, 291); and the CLRC, “gladium militare in signum milicie, auctoritate propria, de altari accepit” (CLRC 40, 83).
33. Ruiz, 124; Nieto Soria, 63.
34. Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 595; Pascua Echegaray, 187.
35. “mater sua regina nobilis ensis cingulum deaccinxit”: DRH 9.10, 291.
36. “ca bien asi como son tenudos de obedescer et de honrar a los que les dan la orden de caballeria, otrosi lo son a los padrinos que son confirmadores della”: *Siete Partidas* 2.21.16, 2:211.
37. Alfonso X, *Setenario*, ed. Vanderford, ley 80, 132.
38. See G. Martin, “Régner sans régner,” n.92; Shadis, *Berenguela*, 106. For an example of how knighting typically excluded women from the ceremonial of power, see Martin-dale, 426–27.
39. “Astiterunt preterea regine domine Berengarie in curia illa omnes nobiliores domine tam religiose quam seculares quotquot erant in regno Castelle”: CLRC 40, 84. See also DRH 9.10, 291. For the role of women at this curia, see Shadis, “Berenguela of Castile’s Political Motherhood,” 354 n.15.
40. *Fernando III*, #93, 2:115–16 (Dec. 12, 1219); AHN, Clero, 379/18 (Dec. 13, 1219); *Fernando III*, #95–98, 2:117–21 (Dec. 15, 20, 21, 1219).
41. He appears, for example, in the first surviving diploma issued by Fernando III: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos* (1116–1230), ed. Lizoain Garrido, #126, 197–98 (Aug. 17, 1217).
42. One Gonzalo Gutiérrez appears in a 1231 charter as “mayordomo de la reyna donna Beatriz”: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos* (1231–1262), ed. Lizoain Garrido, #265, 16–17 (Jun. 1231).
43. See, e.g., AHN, OO.MM., 7/3 (May 23, 1225).
44. “pro multis et gratis obsequiis que serenissime abie mee domine Alienori, necnon et domine Berengarie, genetrici mee, diu ac fideliter exhibuistis”: *Fernando III*, #28, 2:36 (May 2, 1218).
45. García Fernández does not appear as Fernando III’s majordomo in royal diplomas until 1232: AHN, Clero, 519/19 (Feb. 16, 1232). However, his last appearance as Berenguela’s majordomo comes six years earlier (*Fernando III*, #219, 2:264 (Oct. 7, 1226)), although he continues to confirm in the same position. Curiously, several individual charters from the later 1220s already list García Fernández as the king’s majordomo, even though royal diplomas and most individual charters still name Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón in that post. See AHN, Clero, 3428/11–12 (Dec. 30 and 31, 1226); *ibid.*, 912/21 (Jun. 9, 1227); and *ibid.*, 1730/17 (Oct. 21, 1228).
46. *Fernando III*, #119, 2:147 (Jun. 11, 1220).
47. *Ibid.*, 1:118, 120; Barton, *Aristocracy*, 142; Pérez-Bustamante, 65, 164.
48. O’Callaghan, “Introduction,” xxxi.

49. A Juan appears as subnotary in Alfonso VIII's chancery between 1209 and 1212. Whether or not this was the same man, the CLRC's detailed information about the deaths of Alfonso VIII and Leonor strongly suggests that its author was closely connected to the royal court when they died in 1214: O'Callaghan, "Introduction," xxxiii.

50. AHN, cód. 976, f. 77r–v (Mar. 14, 1215).

51. *Fernando III*, 1:504; O'Callaghan, "Introduction," xxxiii.

52. *Alfonso VIII*, #865, 3:518 (Apr. 5, 1210).

53. This example is from AHN, OO.MM., 421/58 (May 18, 1219). Chancellors had often confirmed the diplomas of Fernando II of León and even of Alfonso IX in the late twelfth century, but Alfonso IX had dropped this practice well before he married Berenguela.

54. The first surviving example of this is Fernando III's first surviving diploma: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116–1230)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #126, 197–98 (Aug. 17, 1217).

55. Rucquoi, 193.

56. *Documentos de . . . S. María la Mayor de Valladolid*, comp. Mañueco Villalobos, #11, 66–69 (Jun. 17, 1219); *ibid.*, #12, 70–79 (September 1219).

57. Lomax, 205–11.

58. Rodríguez López, "Política eclesiástica," 9.

59. Fernando Ladrón and his family had ties of kinship and service to the Nazareno family; his son frequently confirmed the charters of Pedro Gómez Nazareno during the 1220s. Like his brothers, Pedro Gómez Nazareno sometimes served as a castellan in castles held by Berenguela. In at least one case, the Nazareno family received the castellany of Berenguela's castle of Vega from Suero Téllez de Meneses: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1116–1230)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #194, 290–91 (October 1224); *ibid.*, #198, 294–95 (May 1225). Pedro Gómez Nazareno was castellan of Valderas in 1222: AHN, cód. 976, f. 78v (August 1222). His brother, García Gómez, was appointed castellan of Vega in 1229 by Alfonso Suárez de Meneses, Vega's tenant, who in turn had received the tenancy from Berenguela: Martínez Sopena, 378.

60. AHN, Clero, 1745/10.

61. *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1932, 6:436–38 (Sep. 15, 1225).

62. AHN, OO.MM., 387/130 (Feb. 23, 1221); *Cartulario de Santa María de Carriaco*, ed. Martínez Martínez, #324, 230 (June 1227).

63. *Fernando III*, #250, 2:291–92 (Jun. 4, 1229). For the identification of this property as Bolaños de Campos, see Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla, 369–74.

64. AHN, OO.MM., 421/63 (Jun. 4, 1229).

65. Rodríguez López, "Dotes y arras," 284; *idem*, *Consolidación*, 171.

66. See, e.g., *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1871, 6:345 (Jun. 16, 1218); *CD Monasterio de Gradefes*, ed. Burón Castro, #386, 458 (November 1220); AHN, OO.MM., 387/131 (Apr. 28, 1221); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1917, 6:412 (Mar. 2, 1224); *ibid.*, #1944, 6:455 (Sep. 22, 1227); AHN, Clero, 967/1 (Jan. 16, 1228); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1970, 6:499–500 (Jun. 8, 1230); AHN, Clero, 967/13 (May 1, 1231).

67. *Fernando III*, #831, 3:417 (Dec. 30, 1224; conf. Nov. 15, 1251).
68. *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1932, 6:436–8 (Sep. 15, 1225).
69. AHN, OO.MM., 387/131 (Apr. 28, 1221).
70. *Alfonso IX*, #366, 2:479 (Aug. 26, 1218). See below.
71. See, e.g., *CD Monasterio de Carrizo*, ed. Casado Lobato, #116, 135 (November 1221); *Alfonso IX*, #420, 2:535 (Mar. 17, 1222); *CD Monasterio de Carrizo*, ed. Casado Lobato, #123, 142 (May 1222). Álvaro Pérez de Castro was absent from the Castilian court between July 18, 1220 (AHN, Clero, 1730/13) and September 13, 1223 (*Fernando III*, #187, 2:227–29). See Chapter 6.
72. *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1917, 6:411–14 (Mar. 2, 1224). Fernández Catón's edition records Valencia's tenant in this document as "Domno Martino". But in the next part of the dating formula, another man is said to hold the tenancy of Mota de Valencia—a subject property—"de manu domini Moranii . . . ex parte regine," "from the hand of don Morán . . . on behalf of the queen." For this reason I suspect that the initial "don Martín" is a scribal error for "don Morán," who often appears in documents without his patronymic, perhaps because his given name was sufficiently distinctive.
73. *Ibid.*, #1944, 6:454–55 (Sep. 22, 1227); *ibid.*, #1970, 6:499–500 (Jun. 8, 1230).
74. See, e.g., *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Ruiz Asencio, #2091, 8:158 (April 1248); Thacker, in *Chronicle of Alfonso X*, trans. Thacker and Escobar, 102 n.3.
75. See Silleras-Fernandez, *Power, Piety, and Patronage*, 158.
76. *Alfonso IX*, #349, 2:457–58 (Sep. 9, 1217).
77. He confirms diplomas between January 10 and July 4, 1218: *Fernando III*, #15, 2:23–24; *ibid.*, #35, 2:44.
78. CLRC 39, 82; DRH 9.9, 289; *Fernando III*, #36, 2:44–46 (Aug. 8, 1218).
79. CLRC 39, 82; DRH 9.9, 289. The CM claims that Alfonso IX attacked the Castilian border only to reclaim wrongfully held Leonese castles: CM 4.94, 333. The truce of November 1217 had expired on Easter, making warfare once again an option.
80. CLRC 39, 82; DRH 9.9, 289; *Honorio III*, #186, 146–47 (Aug. 19, 1218).
81. *Ibid.*, #155, 124 (Jan. 31, 1218).
82. *Fernando III*, 1:245–46.
83. *Alfonso IX*, #352, 2:460 (undated).
84. *Ibid.*, 2:461–62 (undated).
85. *Ibid.*, #366, 2:479 (Aug. 26, 1218).
86. "rex Legionis non disturbet filium suum regem Castelle, per se nec per consilium nec per mandatum suum, contra comites nec adiuuet eos nec amparet nec recipiat eos in suum regnum ut amparentur ibi . . . et si passauerint per regnum suum et moram facere uoluerint ibi dominus rex ex quo sciuerit non consenciat eis. . . . Morandus det prefatum castellum regine Castelle domine Berengarie": *ibid.*
87. DRH 9.9, 289. See also CLRC 39, 82. Álvaro's last known confirmation for Alfonso IX is June 8, 1218: *Alfonso IX*, #364, 2:477.
88. *Ibid.*, #372, 2:486–87 (Apr. 28, 1219); DRH 9.9, 290; *Fernando III*, 1:148.

89. DRH 9.11, 291; CLRC 41, 84. See Hernández, “Casa real de Francia,” 115 n.40.
90. Rodríguez López, *Consolidación*, 199.
91. DRH 9.11, 292.
92. Rodrigo Díaz’s last known confirmation is on July 18, 1220: AHN, Clero, 1730/
13. Álvaro Díaz continued to confirm through August 9, 1223: *ibid.*, 1730/14.
93. Rodríguez López, *Consolidación*, 242.
94. See Chapter 6.
95. Rodríguez López, “*Quod alienus*,” 122.
96. *Ibid.*, 123. See also G. Martin, “Noblesse,” 121 n.114.
97. DRH 9.11, 292.
98. He confirmed diplomas for Alfonso IX on March 10, August 20, and September 2: *Alfonso IX*, #406, 2:521–22; AHN, Clero, 1440/11; *Alfonso IX*, #410, 2:524–25.
99. “Rex autem cum clarissima genetrice sua, congregatis uassallis suis, iuit super Molinam et uastauit totam terram domini de Molina”: CLRC 41, 84. See also DRH 9.11, 292.
100. “superueniente nobili regina Berengaria matre sua . . . concordiam procurauit et certis pactionibus rex soluto exercitu a Molina recessit”: DRH 9.11, 292.
101. CLRC 41, 84.
102. See, e.g., Hernández, “Casa real de Francia,” 117; G. Martin, “Négociation,” 37.
103. *Fernando III*, 1:88. See note 106 below.
104. *Honorio III*, #401, 297 (May 18, 1222); Rodríguez López, “*Quod alienus*,” 121.
105. Gonzalo Pérez also subsequently tried to disinherit Mafalda, in a 1227 pact that would marry his son Pedro to the daughter of the magnate Pedro Fernández de Azagra. According to this pact, Gonzalo Pérez’s son would receive Molina, and Pedro Fernández’s daughter would inherit her father’s seignior, Albarracín. Hernández thinks the existence of this pact means that Infante Alfonso’s marriage to Mafalda had not yet been arranged, but I find it more likely that Gonzalo Pérez was trying to renege on the terms of the earlier agreement. See Hernández, “Casa real de Francia,” 118–19, 145–47.
106. Rodríguez López, “*Quod alienus*,” 110–12; *idem*, *Consolidación*, 250 n.101.
107. Alfonso VIII’s diplomas identify Berenguela as heir long before they make any mention of Blanche. Berenguela first appears in a diploma she co-issued with her parents on July 31, 1181: *Alfonso VIII*, #373, 2:645–48. Blanche is first mentioned in a diploma of March 4, 1188: *ibid.*, #492, 2:848–49. Although even Mariana initially believed the Blanche-as-elder-sister theory, he later acknowledged the error: Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 407.
108. Hernández, “Casa real de Francia,” 113–14, 118–19.
109. Rodríguez López, *Consolidación*, 251; *idem*, “*Quod alienus*,” 127; see also Fortún Pérez de Ciriza, 266.
110. Besides Rodrigo Díaz de Cameros and Gonzalo Pérez de Molina, the magnates involved include Pedro González de Marañón, García Ordóñez de Roa, and Sancho Pérez de Guevara. There are also high-ranking but non-noble knights, such as Rodrigo and

Álvaro González de Orbañeja: Rodríguez López, “*Quod alienus*,” 125–27. Rodrigo González de Orbañeja confirmed Alfonso IX’s diplomas from 1224 to 1226; see Janna Bianchini, “The Distribution of Royal Tenancies in León and Castile c. 1200,” forthcoming.

111. *DM San Juan de Burgos*, ed. Peña Pérez, #66, 94–95 (Aug. 21, 1221).

112. See Kosto, 105–6.

113. Barton, *Aristocracy*, 136; García Calles, 35 n.80.

114. “Vt autem supra scripta omnia firma permaneant et illibata omni tempore perseuerunt, duo instrumenta eiusdem tenoris confecta sunt, et sigillata sigillis domini regis et reginarum et episcopi et capituli burgensis et abbatis et conuentus de Caueisrubeis”: *Documentación de la catedral de Burgos (1184–1222)*, ed. Garrido Garrido, #542, 379 (July 1222).

115. Bedos-Rezak, 64.

116. AHN, cód. 996, f. 49r–v (Jan. 20, 1222).

117. *Ibid.*, f. 39v (Jan. 20, 1222).

118. *Fernando III*, #219, 2:264–65 (Oct. 7, 1226).

119. Turner, 78.

120. *Fernando III*, 1:493; Fernández Valverde, 344 n.38.

121. Lucy Pick argues that the military goals of Castilian monarchs in this period were tribute and booty, not the conquest and territorial expansion associated with the Reconquista: Pick, 28–29, 57–59. Nevertheless, the ideology of war with al-Andalus as the pious and historic duty of Christian kings was available to twelfth- and thirteenth-century monarchs, and carried considerable prestige.

122. “Quadam uero die rex ex insperato humiliter et deuote tanquam filius obediencie, cum irruisset in eum Spiritus Domini coram nobilissima genetrice sua, magnatibus cunctis astantibus, uerbum proposuit in hunc modum: ‘Carissima genetrix et domina dulcissima, quid michi prodest regnum Castelle, quod uestra liberalitas a se, uelud sibi de iure debitum, abdicauit mihique concessitur; quid nobilissima coniux, de longisque partibus per uestram sollicitudinem et industriam adducta mihique cum honore inenarrabili matrimonialiter copulata; quid quod desideria mea, preuenitis in dulcedine materna et, antequam sint a me plene concepta, effectum celeberrimo consumatis, si ignauia torpeo, si flos mee iuuentutis euanesceat sine fructu, si lux glorie regalis . . . in se exstinguitur ed adnichilatur? Ecce tempus reuelatur ab omnipotente Deo in quo, nisi tanquam pusillanimitas et deses dissimulare uelim, domino Iesu Christo, per quem reges regnant, seruire possum contra inimicos fidei christiane. . . Pax nobis reddita est in regno nostro; discordia et capitales inimicie inter Mauros, secte et rixe de nouo exhorte. . . Quid ergo restat? Supplico, clementissima genetrix, a qua post Deum teneo quidquid habeo, ut placeat uobis quod guerram moueam contra Mauros’: CLRC 43, 85–86.

123. See G. Martin, “Régner sans régner,” 26; Hernández, “Casa real de Francia,” 121.

124. Rodríguez López, “Sucesión,” 24–25.

125. “Nobilis regina, uidens cor filii inflammatum et tam nobili desiderio accensum, ut erat mos eius, breuibz filium allocuta est: ‘Fili dulcissime, gloria mea et gaudium

meum uos estis; beatitudinem uestram et succesus semper ex animo desiderauī et, quantumcumque potui, procurauī. Astant uassalli uestri, curia interest, ipsi consulant nobis sicut tenentur et consilium eorum sequimini in hoc facto.' Rex de uoluntate magnatum ad modicum secessit in partem. Ipsi uero remanentes cum regina nobili, tractatu modico et deliberatione habita, omnes in eadem sententiam conuenerunt, ut rex modis omnibus guerram Sarracenis moueret. Rex autem, intellecta uoluntate matris et audito responso magnatum, exultauit in Domino ultra quam credi possit": CLRC 44, 86.

126. CLRC 43, 85.

127. "refuerza la idea de que pertenecían a los círculos nobiliarios más próximos a Berenguela y no *stricto sensu* a los del rey": Rodríguez López, "Sucesión," 28.

128. *Ibid.*, 23–24.

129. "Verum regina nobilis Berengaria mater regis uolens eum a Christianorum iniuriis alienum, milicie sue primicias uoluit Domino dedicare et treugam cum Arabibus noluit ulterius protelari": DRH 9.12, 292. On the meaning of "first fruits," see O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 66, 183.

130. "Et la noble reyna donna Berenguella, su madre del rey don Fernando, con amor et con bien querencia dese su fijo, queriendol estoruar de yr uengar los tuertos que los moros le fazien, fizol consagrar a Dios, asi commo diz la estoria, los comienços de su caualleria, et alongar por mas tiempo las treguas que el auie puestas con los alaraues, et non le dexaua mouer pora alla. Mas al cabo, el rey don Fernando auiendo a coraçon la yda contra los moros, saco su hueste muy grande": PCG 1036, 2:720a.

131. "Parece innegable la manipulación de este pasaje": Rodríguez López, "Sucesión," 26. It also reflects a common trope in crusade writing: that of the woman, usually a mother or wife, who tries to dissuade a man from fulfilling his crusading vow. See Maier, 71–72.

132. "ipse tamen rex, prudentis matris consilium secutus, que ipsi consulerat ut nullo modo recederet ab obsidione donec castrum caperet, firmus et constans in proponito perseuerans. . . . Rex autem . . . reuersus est Toletum ad matrem suam": CLRC 50, 94. My translation is based on *Latin Chronicle*, trans. O'Callaghan, 50, 101.

133. "nobis uolenter obstiterunt cum multitudine armatorum. . . . regi Castelle et regine matri sue preces nostras direximus, quatenus eos a tanta perversitate desistere compellerent per brachium seculare. Et quia dominus rex et regina exhortationes nostras admittere noluerunt": *Honorio III*, #113, 91 (undated). Mansilla suggests that the letter dates from "los primeros años [sic] del año 1217," but the fact that Berenguela and Fernando III were already king and queen of Castile means that it cannot date from early 1217. It does probably date from before 1223, when a compromise exempted Nájera from the bishop's authority for yearly procuration: Rodríguez López, "Política eclesiástica," 17. If the letter was written after Fernando III married Beatriz in 1219, it provides another example of a distinction between the queen-consort and the inheriting queen-mother.

134. *CD medieval de La Rioja*, ed. Rodríguez R. de Lama, #481, 259. The bishop-elect of Calahorra, Juan Pérez, was a protégé of Archbishop Rodrigo: *ibid.*, #481, 257. Although Fernando III and Berenguela were infringing on Calahorra's rights (and perhaps, by extension, offending the archbishop), they were not necessarily on bad terms

with Juan Pérez; they awarded him a royal gift for his “many and welcome services” in 1222, years before the dispute was resolved: *Fernando III*, #165, 2:200–201 (Jul. 14, 1222). In any case, the crown would have had to approve Juan Pérez’s election to the bishopric. See Fortún Pérez de Ciriza, 281–82.

135. Admittedly, Rodrigo had taken his time in registering this complaint—by 1228, Fernando and Berenguela had ignored Toledo’s claims to Covarrubias for more than ten years. See Grassotti, *Don Rodrigo*, 167–69.

136. *Gregorio IX*, #75–6, 1:140–42 (both Feb. 14, 1228).

137. *Ibid.*, #84, 1:186 (Feb. 16, 1228); *ibid.*, #108, 1:181–82 (Jul. 28, 1228).

138. García Calles, 110–12; see also Grassotti, *Don Rodrigo*, 167.

139. The see was technically vacant, since Honorius III had deposed its bishop, Geraldo. However, Geraldo continued to confirm Fernando III’s diplomas as bishop of Segovia until 1224: *Fernando III*, #199, 2:240–42 (Jun. 30, 1224). Evidently the king had taken issue with Honorius’s decision to unseat Geraldo, and the cathedral chapter of Segovia had followed suit, since they did not elect a new bishop until Geraldo’s death in 1224.

140. Rodríguez López, “Política eclesiástica,” 17–18.

141. *Honorio III*, #521, 386 (Oct. 10, 1224).

142. “In eumdem modum scriptum est Berengarie regine Castelle”: *ibid.*, #548, 406 (Apr. 3, 1225).

143. “In eumdem fere modum scriptum est . . . ut dictum regem ad id moneant attentius efficaciter et inducant”: *ibid.*, #521, 386 (Oct. 10, 1224); emphasis mine.

144. “quod intendimus in hac parte a te, proponimus tamquam devoto et catholico principi, quem pro nobis et ecclesia Romana credimus ad faciendum multa maiora paratum, precum humilitate potius obtinere. . . . Rogamus itaque serenitatem tuam et attentius obsecramus, quatinus cum in nullo penitus intendamus honori regio derogare, pro nostra et divina reverentia liberaliter nobis dones et sedi apostolice matri tue, si quid habes contra predictum electum et electionem ipsius, ac libere ipsum, cui omnia pro nostro interventu restitui facias occupata, redire permittas ad Segobiensem ecclesiam et pastorale in ea officium exercere, ita quod per promptum tue voluntatis affectum te fecisse pro nobis rem magis arduam reputemus”: *ibid.*, #548, 406 (Apr. 3, 1225). Honorius addressed another letter to Fernando III on the same day regarding the same problem. This letter, which was sent only to the king and not to Berenguela, took a harsher tone, warning Fernando that it was improper for a king to interfere with the free election of bishops: *ibid.*, #549, 407–8 (Apr. 3, 1225). The reason for these duplicate letters is not clear; perhaps one version was not sent. Nevertheless, the very existence of a papal letter addressed to Berenguela on this issue—even if she never received it—argues that Berenguela was seen as a formal participant in the dispute.

145. *Siete Partidas* 1.5.18, 1:208.

146. Turner, 84–85.

147. “Ex parte venerabilis fratris nostri Toletani archiepiscopi et quorundam suffraganeorum suorum nostris est auribus intimatum. . . . verumtamen eandem compescendi

censuram nolumus ad personam regis et matris eius extendi”: *Honorio III*, #550, 408–9 (Apr. 8, 1225).

148. “Contradictores, si que fuerint et rebelles, exceptis regis et regine personis per censuram ecclesiasticam appellatione postposita compescendo”: *ibid.*, #600, 457 (May 9, 1226). It is unclear from the text whether the queen in question is Berenguela or Beatriz, but the context of the pope’s other missives on this matter—none of which mention Beatriz—suggests rather convincingly that Berenguela was meant.

149. Rodríguez López, “Política eclesiástica,” 16–18. See also Turner, who cites Eleanor’s role in settling ecclesiastical quarrels as evidence of the regalian authority she shared with her son Richard in England: Turner, 79.

150. Ibn ‘Idari, 282.

151. Ibn ‘Idari reports that his own version of the letter was not composed by Abu Yahya Zakariya’ but redacted by another author, Ibn ‘Ayyas: *ibid.* Huici Miranda’s Spanish translation, from which I have made this English version, is as follows: “Pues se ha hecho regresar hacia vosotros a vuestro embajador con lo que os comunicará de la paz concertada, cuyo resplandor brilla, convenida entre los Almohades y vosotros, con la información ilustre que os lleva y os presenta de regalos lo que os llegará por su mano, como muestra de buena voluntad y fruto de la amistad. Todo lo que de esto haya entre nosotros y vosotros conviene que sea respetado e interpretado con la mejor interpretación, si Dios quiere, y vosotros con el apoyo de Dios permaneced en los límites de la tregua y guardadla y castigad a todo el que trame dañar a los musulmanes, porque el cumplir—lo pactado—es el distintivo de los reyes y les es obligatorio seguir sus caminos”: *ibid.*, 283.

152. See Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla Under Queen Urraca*, 126, 190.

153. Examples of such charters include AHN, Clero, 967/1 (Jan. 16, 1228); *ibid.*, 387/30 (Feb. 23, 1221); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1932, 6:436–8 (Sep. 15, 1225); *ibid.*, #1970, 6:499–500 (Jun. 8, 1230).

154. Scholars have, of course, tried to pinpoint such traces, especially in the chronicles. But, as Bernard Reilly has observed, such efforts are speculative by nature and invite “perhaps inevitable problems”: “Bishop Lucas,” 784–85.

CHAPTER 6. THE LEONESE SUCCESSION, 1230

1. *Alfonso IX*, 1:154. See Chapter 3.

2. Sánchez-Albornoz, 1147–49; Estepa Díez, “Curia y Cortes,” 100–101; Shadis, *Berenguela*, 115.

3. González says she was born before her brother Fernando, who was twenty-two when he died in August 1214: *Alfonso IX*, 1:154, 310. Since Alfonso IX and Teresa were married in mid-February 1191 (*ibid.*, 1:61–62), Sancha had to have been born at the end of that year for Fernando to have been born by August 1192.

4. Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, at least, is unequivocal on this point. When the news of Alfonso IX’s death reached Castile, he writes, it was accompanied by the news that “he

had left the kingdom to the daughters he had had with Queen Teresa” (*regnum legauerat, quas ex regina Tharasia susceperat, filiabus*): DRH 9.14, 295.

5. *Alfonso IX*, #346–47, 2:453–56 (May 28 and 29, 1217).

6. *Ibid.*, #350, 2:458–59. See Chapter 5.

7. *Ibid.*, 1:187.

8. AHN, cód. 323, f. 60v–61r (Mar. 14, 1218; conf. Jun. 26, 1228); *Alfonso IX*, #372, 2:486–87 (Apr. 28, 1219).

9. *Ibid.*, #387–89, 2:493–94.

10. AHN, Clero, 1327A/3. The charter states that Alfonso IX was present, along with his magnates Rodrigo Gómez de Traba, Alfonso Rodríguez, and Fernando Muñoz, “and other knights who were in the court of the king don Alfonso.”

11. *Alfonso IX*, #365, 2:478–79 (Jun. 16, 1218); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1873, 6:348 (Aug. 19, 1218).

12. *Alfonso IX*, 1:195; *Anales toledanos*, ed. Porres Martín-Cleto, 2:191.

13. *Alfonso IX*, 1:187, 192.

14. *Ibid.*, #373, 2:488 (Jun. 13, 1219).

15. *Ibid.*, #406, 2:521 (Mar. 20, 1221).

16. *Ibid.*, #415, 2:530–31 (Nov. 14, 1221).

17. *Fernando III*, #518, 3:29 (Feb. 16, 1221); AHN, cód. 1045, 13–14 (Sep. 23, 1223); *Alfonso IX*, #436, 2:550–51 (Dec. 15, 1223); *ibid.*, #441, 2:554–55 (Apr. 24, 1224).

18. *Ibid.*, #411, 2:526 (Oct. 4, 1221).

19. *Ibid.*, #416, 2:531–32 (Feb. 8, 1222).

20. For example, between 1211 and 1214, Teresa’s son Fernando co-issued or corroborated seven of Alfonso IX’s 43 extant diplomas (not including writs), a rate of 16 percent. Between their first appearance in 1217 and their last in 1224, Sancha and Dulce co-issued or corroborated 14 of the king’s 87 extant diplomas (not including writs), also a rate of 16 percent.

21. *Honorio III*, #179, 141–42.

22. “Nos igitur tuis, et karissime in Christo filie nostre B illustris regine matris tue precibus inclinati”: *ibid.*, 142; *Fernando III*, 1:248 n.76. For the input and oath of the prelates and nobles, see Chapter 3.

23. Like Honorius III, Innocent III had constantly enjoined the Iberian monarchs to keep peace among themselves, and—as in the dispute over Berenguela’s arras—had often personally intervened in hopes of reconciling warring kings. See *Inocencio III* and *Honorio III*.

24. “te ipsius [Alfonso IX] successorem legitimum declarantes”: *Honorio III*, #179, 142 (emphasis mine).

25. *Fernando III*, 1:248 n.76.

26. *Ibid.*, 1:249.

27. The chronology of Jaume’s autobiography, the *Llibre dels fets*, gives 1220 (*Book of Deeds*, trans. Smith and Buffery, 17, 33). González says that they waited until Jaume had already attained his majority, at the age of fourteen (*Fernando III*, 1:249), but Jaume did not turn fourteen until 1222.

28. James I, *Book of Deeds* 17, 33. The *Llibre dels fets* was probably written at intervals throughout Jaume's reign, beginning perhaps in the 1230s: Smith, "Introduction," 7.

29. Leonor had, for example, accompanied Berenguela to the Girón castle of Autillo during the civil war of 1217: CLRC 32, 75.

30. *Fernando III*, 1:250.

31. James I, *Book of Deeds* 18, 33–34. Smith notes that Jaume's account of his nobles' plots against him tends toward paranoia ("Introduction," 8), but the king's fears were evidently real enough to him, even if they are baseless from a historical perspective.

32. CLRC 42, 84; *Latin Chronicle* 42, 87.

33. *Fernando III*, 1:250–51. The traditional pilgrimage route from France, the Camino de Santiago, runs through northern Castile on its way to León. But inasmuch as Jean met the Castilian court in Toledo, a southern frontier city well off the pilgrim road, his visit was a matter of more than mere convenience.

34. For other instances of communication between Berenguela and Blanche, see Hernández, "Casa real de Francia."

35. *Alfonso IX*, 1:198.

36. "Regina uero domina Berengaria, precauens in futurum, et, tanquam prudens femina preuidens impedimentum quod dictus rex Iherosolimitanus posset afferre filio suo, regi domino Fernando, in iure quod habebat in regno Legionense, si predictus rex contraheret matrimonium cum altera filiarum regis Legionensis, quas susceperat ex regina domina Therasia, et si remaneret in ipso regno, preelegit dare dicto regi filiam suam, Berengariam nomine, in uxorem": CLRC 42, 84–85. Cf. Hernández, "Casa real de Francia," 120.

37. *Fernando III*, 1:62 n.4.

38. "Promisit regina": CLRC 42, 85. See also Shadis, *Berenguela*, 105.

39. *Alfonso IX*, #440–42, 2:553–55 (Apr. 11, Apr. 24, Jun. 2, 1224); *Fernando III*, 1:251.

40. This is the only diploma Sancha and Dulce co-issued in 1224: *Alfonso IX*, #438–46, 2:552–59 (Jan. 26 to Dec. 6, 1224); AHN, OO.MM., 568/9 (Dec. 14, 1224).

41. "munera larga": CLRC 42, 85.

42. The Treaty of Seligenstadt illustrates these concerns in Berenguela's case; see Chapter 1.

43. *Alfonso IX*, #342, 2:448–51 (Jan. 6, 1217).

44. For a detailed discussion of Alfonso IX's strategies and their consequences, see my article, "Foreigners and Foes in the Leonese Succession Crisis of 1230."

45. His last appearances come in late summer: AHN, Clero, 1440/11 (Aug. 20, 1221); *Alfonso IX*, #410, 2:525 (Sep. 2, 1221).

46. Pérez-Bustamante, 247.

47. In 1224 these were Fernando Muñoz and Pedro Fernández de Tiedra.

48. The first surviving instance is on June 10, 1228: *Alfonso IX*, #547, 2:647–48.

49. *Ibid.*, #613, 2:710–11 (Mar. 30, 1230). They received a number of smaller tenancies, such as Almanza and Rueda.

50. He may have died, of course, but his death date is difficult to establish.

51. CM 4.98, 337–38.

52. CLRC 60, 103; DRH 9.14, 295.

53. *Fernando III*, 1:254; see also O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 92, and *Gregorio IX*, #146, 220–21 (Jun. 4, 1229); *ibid.*, #299, 271 (Jun. 11, 1233). Did Berenguela's sister Leonor, queen of Aragón, help bring about this marriage in order to win Infante Pedro away from Alfonso IX? Leonor's own marriage to Jaume I was not dissolved until mid-1229: *ibid.*, #128, 202 (Feb. 6, 1229); see also *Fernando III*, 1:253–54.

54. AHN, Clero, 3551/17 (Jul. 22, 1230). The sources for the Leonese succession war name very few of the nobles involved—the CLRC identifies Rodrigo Fernández de Valduerna and Diego and Ramiro Froilaz (60, 103)—but the infante is conspicuously absent even on this short list.

55. CLRC 60, 103.

56. *Ibid.*; CM 4.99, 338.

57. He held Astorga between February 16, 1222 (*Alfonso IX*, #417, 2:533) and August 1, 1230 (*ibid.*, #620, 2:718).

58. *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1916, 6:411 (Sep. 29, 1223).

59. “uenerunt Astoricam, nec fuerunt recepte sicut ipse uolebant. Inde recedentes cum indignatione, uenerunt Legionem, ubi similiter non fuerunt recepte sicut uolebant. Nam responsio populi et episcoporum erat quod personas ipsarum reciperent et eis liberenter seruirent, sed non reciperent milites earum uel armatos”: CLRC 60, 103.

60. For the often tense relationships among town councils, royal tenants, and bishops, see Estepa Díez, *Estructura social*, 459, 466–67, 479–80, and Martínez Sopena, 519.

61. *Alfonso IX*, #135, 2:194 (Dec. 8, 1199); CM 4.85, 325; *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:365–74 (Mar. 26, 1206).

62. “Set tamen regni prelati . . . in auditu auris regem Fernandum in regem ilico receperunt, scilicet, Iohannes Ouetensis, Nunius Astoricensis, Rodericus Legionensis, Michael Lucensis, Martinus Salamantinus, Martinus Mindoniensis, Michael Ciuitatensis, Sancius Cauriensis. Hii omnes cum suis ciuitatibus, patre mortuo, filio se dederunt, nec rebellio cogitata potuit inualere”: DRH 9.14, 296.

63. Rodríguez López, “Dotes y arras,” 285.

64. *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:365–74 (Mar. 26, 1206). For the tenancy of Benavente during Berenguela's marriage, see, e.g., AHN, cód. 976, f. 104r (Oct. 4, 1200); AHN, cód. 967, f. 103r (Jun. 7, 1203).

65. *Alfonso IX*, #135, 2:194 (Dec. 8, 1199); *Honorio III*, #73, 59 (Jul. 31, 1217).

66. “ipsas semper comitabatur”: CLRC 60, 103.

67. *Ibid.*; DRH 9.14, 295.

68. “habito consilio cum matre, archiepiscopo et magnatibus, qui tunc aderant”: CLRC 60, 103–4.

69. “castrum ei ut domino reddiderunt”: DRH 9.14, 295.

70. *Ibid.* These oaths most likely took place at the “Cortes” of Benavente (1202) and in the context of the Treaty of Cabrerros (1206); see Chapters 2 and 3.

71. DRH 9.14, 295.
72. *Alfonso IX*, #350, 2:458–59; Rodríguez López, “Dotes y arras,” 285.
73. “ad regem tanquam ad dominum ex Tauro nobilissimo oppido milites aduenerunt, qui regem sui et oppidi naturalem dominum cognouerunt et, ut sequenti die Taurum adiret, instantissime supplicarunt, nobili regina hec omnia sagacissime procurante. Altera uero die Taurum intrauimus, ubi omnibus annuentibus rex Fernandus, facto sibi hominio, in regem et dominum est receptus”: DRH 9.14, 295–96.
74. “Villampando, quam tenebat regina domina Berengaria”: CLRC 60, 104.
75. *Alfonso VIII*, #845, 3:479–80 (Jun. 27, 1209); *ibid.*, #681, 3:204–8 (Dec. 8, 1199); Rodríguez López, “Dotes y arras,” 281.
76. “per castra domine regine”: DRH 9.14, 296.
77. “recepimus ex aliis ciuitatibus milites et nuncios uenientes, qui uidebantur de receptione regis aliquantulum dubitare. Sorores enim domini regis Sancia et Dulcis . . . rebellionem cum complicitibus preparabant”: *ibid.*
78. *Crónica de la población de Ávila*, ed. Hernández Segura, 44.
79. “Ipse uero rex, contemptis uanis quibusdam, que sibi proposita fuerant”: CLRC 60, 104. See Rodríguez López, *Consolidación*, 174.
80. See, e.g., AHN, OO.MM., 387/128 (Mar. 17, 1220); *Alfonso IX*, #436, 2:551 (Dec. 15, 1223); AHN, cód. 1045, p. 8 (May 16, 1229).
81. *Crónica de la población de Ávila*, ed. Hernández Segura, 44.
82. DRH 9.14, 296. In the Treaty of Cabrerós Berenguela received only the *portazgo* of Mansilla, and the town had been under Leonese authority since then. Rodrigo Fernández is named as its tenant in a diploma of August 13, 1228 (*Alfonso IX*, #581, 2:676); prior to that it had been in the hands of Diego and Ramiro Froilaz. Mayorga proper had remained a possession of the crown, but during Berenguela’s marriage, Alfonso Téllez de Meneses and Pedro Rodríguez (de Quiñones?) both served as tenants there. See, e.g., AHN, Clero, 908/10–12 (Jan. 16, 1200), and *Alfonso IX*, #152, 2:216 (May 31, 1201, when the same Pedro Rodríguez held Mansilla).
83. “Etenim miles nobilissimus Didacus, cum esset Legione, fecit suos per palacium regis furtiue ascendere, et turrem et ecclesiam beati Ysidori occupauit. Reuerendus autem pater Rodericus, episcopus Legionensis, uir nobilis, prouidus et honestus, ut hec uidit, ecclesiam Legionensis sedis armis, hominibus et bellicis apparatibus munivit, ut ciuitas regi Fernando seruaretur. Ciues et turres murorum et ecclesiarum, ut potuerunt, similiter munierunt. Erat tunc in ipsa ciuitate die et nocte continua uox belli et tribulatio et angustia magna. Sed misericordia Dei non defuit et predictus Didacus egritudine ualida est percussus, ita ut ipse uel in eo nescio quis clamaret, quod beatus Ysidorus ob auxilium regis Fernandi uolebat ipsum militem interficere, eo quod occupauerat turrem et ecclesiam eius. Preterea a capite dicti militis oculi uidebantur auelli et a concauitate sua egrediebantur non sine magno dolore, unde compulsus est, cum se uideret tam grauissime uexari, consilio Sancie comitisse uenerabilis matris sue, abbati et conuentui ipsius monasterii turrem et ecclesiam restituit et dampna que illis intulerat, integrauit, dato super sancta Dei euangelia iuramento, quod de cetero esset miles et uassallus beati Ysidori confessoris.

Illico sanitati restitutus est et statim cum suis de ciuitate egressus. Episcopus autem Rodericus et ciues gaudentes in Domino, quod etiam sancti pro rege Fredenando pugnabant, miserunt nuncios illi, ut ueniret cito suam accipere ciuitatem. Venit itaque rex Fernandus . . . una cum prudentissima domina Berengaria matre sua et Legionensem ciuitatem ingressus cum gloria magna obtinuit regnum patrum suorum”: CM 4.99, 338–39. For the peculiarity of Diego Froilaz becoming a “knight and vassal” of San Isidoro, see Grassotti, *Instituciones*, 1:270–71.

84. CLRC 60, 104.

85. “Sequenti uero die intrauimus Legionem, que in regno illo sedis regie preminet dignitate, ibique ab episcopo et uniuersis ciuibus ad regni Legionis fastigium eleuatur, clero et populo *Tē Deum laudamus* cantantibus concorditer et iocunde; et ex tunc rex Castelle et Legionis pariter est uocatus”: DRH 9.15, 296.

86. CLRC 60, 104. García Rodríguez Carnota and members of his family appear frequently in documents connected to the city of León; see, e.g., *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1728, 6:79–80 (April 1197) and AHN, OO.MM., 387/118 (January 1217). He had been merino mayor in the kingdom of León between March 1223 (*CD Catedral de León*, ed. Fernández Catón, #1915, 6:409) and September 1, 1230 (AHN, OO.MM., 389/168). The towers of León, however, had been in the hands of García Martínez Navarro between December 1224 (AHN, Clero, 826/20) and September 1, 1230 (AHN, OO.MM., 389/168). It is not clear what role, if any, García Martínez Navarro played in the succession crisis.

87. *Fernando III*, 1:258.

88. *Ibid.*, #268, 2:309 (Nov. 7, 1230).

89. Fernando III issued three known diplomas in the interval between his occupation of the city of León and the sealing of the Treaty of Benavente. All three lack the confirmation of any Leonese noble: *ibid.*; *Documentos de la catedral de Ávila*, ed. Barrios García, #70, 119–20 (Nov. 9, 1230); *Fernando III*, #269, 2:310–11 (Nov. 24, 1230).

90. CLRC 60, 104.

91. AHN, cód. 987, f. 23v (Jan. 2, 1231).

92. CLRC 60, 104.

93. “Ibique nuncii aduenerunt ex parte regine Tharasie super compositione inter-nuncia referentes; et licet uerbum magnatibus displiceret, tamen regina nobilis in tantum timuit regni et pauperum uastationem, quod procurauit, ut rex subsisteret Legione et ipsa iret Valenciam de concordia cum regina Tharasia tractatura. Cumque ambe regine Valencie conuenissent, sic sollercia regine nobilis Berengarie procurauit, ut regis sorores regi restituerent omnia que tenebant et ipse essent prouisione contente, quam eis rex et regina nobilis assignarent et, si quid iuris in regno habebant, simpliciter resignarent. Et pacto huiusmodi confirmato rex aduenit et inde omnes iuimus Beneuentum, quo etiam infantes filie regine Tharasie aduenerunt”: DRH 9.15, 296.

94. Rodríguez López, “Dotes y arras,” 286.

95. “Et hec infantes debent facere reddi domino regi omnia castra et omnes muniti-ones que per portarium vel homagium illarum tenent milites seu alii, et resignant iuri

regni Legionensis, si quod habebant vel habere se contendebant, et abrenuntiant omnibus privilegijs seu cartis ab illustri A. rege patre suo bone memorie sibi factis super donatione seu concessione regni, et absolvunt omnes tam milites quam alios ab homagio quod sibi fecerint”: *Fernando III*, #270, 2:313–14 (Dec. 11, 1230).

96. These were Aguilar, Ardón, Belvís, Castrogonzalo, and Monteagudo in León; Allariz, Cabreira, Candrei, Lobanzana, Milmanda, San Juan de Peña Cornera, and Santa Cruz in Galicia.

97. “Ut etiam presens factum maioris roboris obtineat firmitatem, sigillis subscrip-torum, meo et regine domne Berengarie, genitricis mee, et infantum, sororum mearum, videlicet, presentem paginam facimus communiri”: *Fernando III*, #270, 2:311–14 (Dec. 11, 1230).

98. *Ibid.*, 2:313.

99. The CLRC confirms this; see below.

100. The castles were Allariz, Cabreira, Candrei, Lobanzana, Milmanda, and Santa Cruz.

101. Rodríguez López, “Dotes y arras,” 286–88.

102. “presentibus . . . duabus reginis supradictis et rege et sororibus et archiepiscopis Toletano et Compostellano et baronibus multis et consilijs”: CLRC 61, 104.

103. See Nieto Soria, 43; Estepa Díez, “Curia y Cortes,” 101.

104. Cf. Sánchez-Albornoz, 1149.

105. There are descriptions of this sort from Fernández Catón in *CD Catedral de León*, 6:x–xi, and in González Jiménez, 17. Teresa was canonized in 1705. Admittedly, Archbishop Rodrigo encourages this view in one of his nods to the conventions of medieval femininity, when he says that Berenguela overrode her nobles’ objections and negotiated with Teresa because she was concerned that the kingdom’s poor would suffer if the war continued.

106. “et in hoc enituit quamplurimum regine nobilis sollers cura, qua non minori gracia regi filio dedit hoc regnum quam regnum Castelle, quod ad eam iure hereditario pertinebat. Sic enim sciuit omnia ordinare, ut licet regnorum unio fere omnibus displiceret, ipsa studuit taliter prouidere, ut sine sanguinis effusione regnorum unio proueniret et utrumque regnum pace perpetua letaretur”: DRH 9.15, 297.

107. *Fernando III*, #272, 2:314–17.

108. He did not, however, woo them by handing out tenancies—at least not yet. The Leonese nobles’ failure to support Fernando III during the succession crisis is emphasized by the vacancy of most Leonese tenancies in the first several months of his reign. Only in the summer of 1231 do tenants begin to reappear: Rodrigo Fernández in Mayorga, Diego and Ramiro Froilaz in Oviedo, etc.: AHN, Clero, 913/16 (June 1231); *ibid.*, 1597/14 (Jul. 25, 1231).

109. Bennett, 59; Weissberger, xvi.

CHAPTER 7. QUEEN OF CASTILE AND LEÓN, 1230–1246

1. “ego Ferrandus, Dei gratia rex Castelle et Toleti, Legionis et Gallecie . . . ex assensu et beneplacito regine domine Berengarie, genitricis mee”: *Fernando III*, #268,

2:309 (Nov. 7, 1230); *ibid.*, #269, 2:310 (Nov. 24, 1230). These are Fernando III's first surviving diplomas as king of León.

2. See, e.g., AC León, #1111 (Mar. 24, 1238).

3. "Regnante rege don Ferrando con la reyna donna Berenguiella su madre, et con la reyna donna Beatriz su mugier en Castiella et en Toledo, et in Leon et in Gallizia": AHN, Clero, 1730/20 (Oct. 22, 1232). See also *ibid.*, 914/5 (1233) and 914/6 (Dec. 28, 1234).

4. CM, Praef. 1, 4.

5. In 1163, after a long struggle to claim regency and dominion in part or all of Castile, Fernando II co-issued a diploma with the underage Alfonso VIII of Castile and titled himself "king of the Spanish," *rex Hispanorum: Alfonso VIII*, #63, 2:112 (October 1163); *ibid.*, 1:170.

6. *Fernando III*, #533, 3:47 (Sep. 10, 1234).

7. See, e.g., G. Martin, "Régner sans régner," 26, 42; Linehan, "Don Rodrigo and the Government," 94–95. Miriam Shadis discusses Berenguela's authority after 1230 in *Berenguela of Castile*, and argues that it did not decline with age (120). But because Shadis's focus is on Berenguela's motherhood as a source of her legitimacy, she never raises the question of why León accepted Berenguela as Fernando III's coruler, despite her lack of legal standing in that kingdom.

8. Her mother, Leonor, died at about fifty-two. Of her sisters who reached adulthood, Urraca died at about thirty-four, Blanche at about sixty-four, and Leonor at about forty-two. The birth date of her sister Constanza is unknown, but Constanza predeceased Berenguela, dying in 1243.

9. "Hec enim regina nobilis Berengaria sic filium in bonis operibus enutrit, quod bona studia, que regina nobilis nullius uirtutis oblita, nullius charismatis expers, ut lac mellifluum graciis circumfusum, cordi eius influere non cessauit nec umquam ab ubere pleno uirtutibus ablactauit, et licet uir factus et in etate roboris confirmatus, mater eius numquam cessauit nec cessat que Deo et hominibus sunt accepta studio uigili suadere, quia nec umquam feminea, set semper magnificencie opera persuasit": DRH 9.17, 300. This passage follows the DRH's account of the year 1236, and immediately precedes its concluding chapter, which is dated 1243.

10. Cf. Stafford, "Portrayal," 145.

11. One of Empress Matilda's epitaphs praised her as "surpass[ing] women in 'having nothing womanly'": Martindale, 424. Cf. Huneycutt, "Female Succession," 199.

12. Cf. Shadis, *Berenguela*, 16–17, although she notes that masculinizing Berenguela seems to be a hobby of modern historians more than medieval ones.

13. Poulet, 114.

14. Rodrigo's imagery also echoes the nursing metaphors of twelfth-century Cistercian texts, in which an authority figure (such as God, Jesus, the Church, or a prelate) was said to dispense affection, grace, or instruction by suckling subordinates: Bynum, 115, 120–24, 151–58.

15. Similarly, Silleras-Fernandez argues that women's legal inability to inherit the throne in the Crown of Aragón was what made it possible for them to occupy the powerful office of queen-lieutenant: *Power, Piety, and Patronage*, 164.

16. *Fernando III*, #276–314, 2:319–62 (Dec. 30, 1230–Mar. 23, 1231); DRH 9.15, 297; CLRC 61, 105.

17. He was the son of Afonso II, who was Queen Teresa's brother. However, Sancho II was also first cousin to Fernando III through his mother, Urraca of Castile, Berenguela's sister.

18. "et istud conuenimus ego et mater mea domina Berengaria regina, et uxor mea domina Beatrice regina, quod daremus ei predictum castrum . . . sed istud facere non potuimus quousque liberaremus dictum castrum de pleyto domne Therasie regine . . . et liberauimus sepedictum castrum isto modo: quod ego promisi, quod, si rex Portugalis malum fecerit in castris siue in rebus que regina domna Therasia habet in Portogale, ego teneor defendere illam et iuuare et castra sua et res suas quas habet in Portogale, sicut castra mea et res meas; et istud me facturum bona fide promitto. Et si de me aliquid humanum contigerit, mater mea regina domina Berengaria et uxor mea regina domina Beatrice, et filius meus qui regnauerit pro me, teneantur ad istud idem complendum": *Fernando III*, #319, 2:367 (Apr. 13, 1231).

19. See Baquero Moreno, 314.

20. "rex noster regnum paternum in pace habuit, preter Galleciam, ad quam non potuit statim ire et in qua non modico turbatio, a morte patris orta, perdurabat": CLRC 61, 105.

21. Alfonso IX held Castrotoraf by 1217, when Honorius III instructed the bishop of Burgos and the bishop and dean of Palencia to see that the castle was returned to the Order of Santiago. Honorius noted, however, that Innocent III had already issued the same warning, which means that Alfonso IX had occupied Castrotoraf before 1216: *Honorio III*, #55, 43.

22. "faciamus pacem, guerram et treugas pro uobis et pro filiabus uestris, infantibus dona Sancia et dona Dulcia": AHN, OO.MM., 88/18 (May 1229). See Ayala Martínez, 75–76.

23. *Gregorio IX*, #443, 1:505 (Jun. 26, 1234); *Fernando III*, #293, 2:337 (Jan. 15, 1231).

24. The treaty survives because of its inclusion in the papal register: *Gregorio IX*, #243, 1:317–22 (Dec. 8, 1231).

25. For all of this episode, see *Fernando III*, 1:260–62.

26. "nos vidimus, et hoc testamur, predictum magistrum et maiorem comendatorem eiusdem ordinis et alios fratres suos . . . prostratos ante pedes domini regis et domine nostre regine genitricis eius petere cum multa instancia et humilitate devota a domino rege": *Documentos zamoranos*, ed. Martín, #108, 83 (undated).

27. "non semel sed sepius fixis genibus ante pedes domini regis et matris eius cum magna instancia postulabant ut dominus rex Castrum Toraph eis restituere dignaretur": *ibid.*, 83–84 (undated).

28. The thirteenth-century *Cartulario de Tojos Outos* depicts kings and queens enthroned side by side in precisely this way. See, e.g., AHN, cód. 1002, f. 9v. See also Shadis, *Berenguela*, 47.

29. *Documentos zamoranos*, ed. Martín, #108, 83 (undated). The scant evidence available in the letters suggests that, at minimum, this letter and the one sent by Mauricio

describe the same events. The group letter says that the Order came before Fernando III while the king was at Las Huelgas, in Burgos. Mauricio's letter says that the master of Santiago had asked him to testify about what had happened at his, Mauricio's, court—that is, in Burgos. He adds that he witnessed the Order's request around the previous feast of All Saints, November 1. Fernando III was in Burgos in October and early November of 1233, including on October 19 (AHN, Clero, 3440/2) and November 12 (*ibid.*, 369/9), the closest dates for which we have evidence.

30. *Gregorio IX*, #415, 1:479–80 (Jan. 29, 1234); *ibid.*, #443, 1:504–6 (Jun. 26, 1234).

31. I present this evidence with the same caveats given in Chapter 5. Accidents of documentary survival may have skewed our perspective on Berenguela's activities—they may be inappropriately magnified, inappropriately diminished, or disproportionately centered on certain areas. A number of the charters I cite below deal with the Burgos region, for example, where Berenguela had close ties and numerous partisans. However, others relate to areas such as Extremadura and the Transierra, where Berenguela had no patrimony and more limited influence. For that reason, I consider these documents reasonably valid as a representative sample of larger trends.

32. “in presencia Fredinandi, illustris regis Toleti et Castelle, Legionis atque Gallecie, domna Berengaria regina, matre eius, ibidem presencialiter existente”: *Fernando III*, #337, 2:387 (May 16, 1231).

33. “in presentia domini illustris F. regis castelle et legionis, et serenissime matris sue regine domine Berengarie de consensu et beneplacito eorumdem”: AHN, cód. 1045, 245–47 (Apr. 21, 1231).

34. “assí como ge los yo prometí et ge los otorgué . . . ante mi madre et ante mios ricos omnes, et antel arçobispo, et ante los obispos, et ante caueros de Castiella et de Estremadura, e ante toda mi corte”: *Fernando III*, #809, 3:387–88 (Nov. 18, 1250); cf. *ibid.*, #827, 3:413 (Jul. 9, 1251).

35. See Estepa Díez, “Curia y Cortes,” 72–3, 84–85; Martínez Díez, 145; O'Callaghan, “Las Cortes de Castilla y León,” 156.

36. See Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*.

37. “Et por queste cambio fuese durable por siempre, nos, el [sic] abbatissa, e las infantes e el convento . . . rogamus al rey don Fernando e a la reyna donna Berenguela, su madre, que otorguen et que confirmen este cambio et que pongan los sellos en estas cartas”: *Documentación del Hospital del Rey de Burgos (1136–1277)*, ed. Palacín Gálvez and Martínez García, #155, 141–43 (February 1232). They received the joint confirmation and seals a few months later: “Yo don Fernando, por la gracia de Dios rey de Castilla et de Toledo e de León e de Galicia, et la reyna donna Berenguela, mi madre, otorgamos este cambio et confirmamos esta carta con nuestros sellos e mandamos que vala siempre”: *Fernando III*, #477, 2:551 (Jul. 26, 1232).

38. “E porque sea firme e estable esta uendida nos, don Iohan, por la gracia de Dios obispo de Burgos e chancellor del rey, e nos, el cabillo de Sancta Maria de Burgos, ponemos nuestros sellos en esta carta e rogamos al rey don Ferrando e a la reyna donna Berenguella, su madre, qe [sic] manden poner hy los sos sellos. . . . Et yo, don Ferrando,

por la gracia de Dios rey de Castiella e de Toledo e de Leon e de Gallizia e de Cordoua e de Murcia, e yo, donna Berenguella, por la gracia de Dios reyna de Castiella e de Toledo, por ruego de don Iohan, obispo de Burgos e chancellor del rey, mandamos poner nuestros seellos en esta carta”: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1231–1262)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #349, 133 (Aug. 31, 1244).

39. “con consejo de la reyna, mi madre, e del arzobispo [sic] don Rodrigo de Toledo, e de obispos e ricos omnes e de otros omnes bonos que conmigo eran”: *Fernando III*, #784, 3:355 (Aug. 24, 1249). Since his earlier judgement had not been obeyed, the case had come before Fernando III again in 1249. Again, the language intimates that the first hearing may have occurred at a *curia plena*, which included *omnes bonos/boni homines* from the towns.

40. “E yo ove mio consejo con el infant don Alfons, mio fijo, et con el arzobispo de Santiago, et con los obispos et con los ricosomes que eran conmigo”: *ibid.*, #794, 3:369 (Jul. 4, 1250).

41. “controuersia uerteretur inter abbatem et conuentum de Vite ex una parte et Gomicium Gundissalui et Sanciam Gundissalui, sororem eius, ex altera, in presencia mei Ferrandi, Dei gratia regis Castelle et Toleti, Legionis, Gallecie et Cordube, et in presencia serenissime regine domine Berengarie, matris mee”: *ibid.*, #646, 3:180–81 (March 1239).

42. *Ibid.*, 3:181 (March 1239).

43. *Ibid.*

44. “fuele neçesario yrse para ante el rey don Fernando III e para ante la reyna doña Berenguella, su madre, en cuya presencia su causa fue luengamente tratada. . . . Mas finalmente, a pocos días, procurándolo la misericordia diuinal, fue . . . dispuesto, ca como el señor rei e la reyna su madre e toda la corte conoçien las libertades del monesterio de San Fagún. . . . los dichos rei e reyna juzgaron que ellos eran dignos de ser enforcados; mas Rui González Jirón, que los favoreçia, rogó por ellos.

“Entonçes el señor rei e reyna hordenaron por bien de paz que los dichos burg[u]eses, los quales el señor rei avía juzgado ser traidores e falsos a su señor, conbiene a saver, al abad de San Fagum . . . que diesen e posiesen a sí e a todos sus bienes en arvitrio e boluntad de su señor el abad”: *Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún*, ed. Ubieto Arteta, 83, 138–39. Cf. Shadis, *Berenguela*, 117, which misreads *enforcados* as *enforçados*.

45. Ubieto Arteta, in *Crónicas anónimas de Sahagún*, 5–6.

46. *Fernando III*, #299, 2:346 (Jan. 25, 1231); AHN, OO.MM., 389/179 (Jun. 24, 1233).

47. AHN, Sellos, 49/9 (Apr. 15, 1244); *Libro de privilegios de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén*, ed. Ayala Martínez, #291–93, 496–99 (Apr. 15, 1244); *ibid.*, #294, 500–501 (Jun. 15, 1244).

48. Linehan, *History and the Historians*, 376.

49. I have found one diploma in which he does act alone, but it is a confirmation of a previous king’s grant of property to the Hospitallers, not a new alienation of crown lands: *Libro de privilegios de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén*, ed. Ayala Martínez, #289, 494–95 (Mar. 2, 1244).

50. He had, for example, received many of the old Cameros tenancies in northeastern Castile after Rodrigo and Álvaro Díaz de Cameros rebelled in the 1220s; see Chapter 5.

51. “ira plenus et indignatione, maxime quia se spretum et contemptibilem habitum in conspectu regis multis iudiciis perpenderat, ut dicebat”: CLRC 65, 106.

52. *Fernando III*, 1:132.

53. “coniunctus est Aluarus Petri Lupo Didaci nexu firmissimo, sicut ipsi fatebantur, contra inimicos comunes, populo reliquo suspicante fedus initum contra regis familiares, nec dicam contra regem, quod apparuit ex post facto”: CLRC 65, 107.

54. Barton, “From Mercenary to Crusader,” 125.

55. Rodrigo Fernández de Castro was Álvaro Pérez’s great-grandfather, and Mencía López’s great-great-grandfather. See O’Callaghan, *Latin Chronicle*, 125 n.4.

56. CLRC 65, 107. The CLRC expressly notes that Berenguela was with Fernando III when the news of the marriage came: “existentibus Burgis rege et regina, matre sua.” Mencía López’s mother, Urraca Alfonso, was an illegitimate daughter of Alfonso IX. See also Hernández, “Casa real de Francia,” 129–30.

57. “rex, ira commotus”: CLRC 64–65, 107.

58. “Sed Aluarus Petri, usus consilio saniori, supposuit se uoluntati et dispositioni reginarum domine Berengarie et domine Beatricis.

Ipsae uero, habito prudentum uirorum consilio, mandauerunt Aluaro Petri ut relinqueret Paredes sicut prius erat, et exiret de toto regno iturus in terram Sarracenorum, ibique moraturus uel alibi, donec regis gratiam recuperare posset”: CLRC 65, 107–8.

59. See Rodríguez López, *Consolidación*, 206.

60. “Lupus Didaci XVII castra que tenebat de regno Castelle, sed non receperat ea per portarium, regis esse recognouit et de manu regis, mediante portario suo, recepit, terra sibi asegurata usque ad quinquenium per reginam dominam Berengariam, sub cunctis conditionibus et honestis, confirmante filio matris factum”: CLRC 65, 108.

61. Parsons has suggested that the intercessory role became more important for queens-consort as they aged, because it demonstrated their closeness to the king even when they could no longer bear children. For Berenguela, however, intercession was mainly valuable as a means of patronage; her influence with Fernando III had never depended on her fertility. See Parsons, “Queen’s Intercession,” 151.

62. CLRC 43, 85–86.

63. “Regine uero, ualde prudentes domine, preintelligentes mala, que possent accidere frontarie nostre de confederatione Aluari Petri cum Abehut, rege Maurorum cismarino, dederunt opera efficaciter, ut Aluarus Petri gratie regis restitueretur: quod et factum est, et sic terram suam recuperauit et castra”: CLRC 65, 108.

64. For Marian intercession and queenship in thirteenth-century England, see Parsons, “Queen’s Intercession.”

65. See Lehfelddt, 49–53. Some thirteenth-century theologians went so far as to argue that Mary and Jesus were “one and the same,” a view that would have had interesting connotations for Berenguela and Fernando III: Carpenter, 63, 83 n.34.

66. PCG 1059, 2:741a.

67. “Et metiose el rey luego en camino, et tornose para Burgos o estauan las reynas. Ellas conseiaron al rey de guisa porquel perdono a ese don Diego, et le torno toda la tierra luego y, et aun ennadiol demas Alcaraz, que ante non tenie”: *ibid.*, 2:741b.

68. “Quando plegaron, fallaronla en so acuerdo e demandaronle que queria; et ella dixo que queria la orden e ques tenie siempre por merced de la reyna dona Bererenguella [sic]; el corpo e el auer e quanto que auia heredamiento metiolo todo en so poder de la reyna dona Berenguella e del abbatissa dona Agnes del monesterio de Burgos e dieronle la orden”: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1231–1262)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #337, 119–20 (Feb. 26, 1243).

69. *Ibid.*, 121. The charter gives 891 maravedís and 14 *almudes* of wheat, a quantity worth seven maravedís: *Fernando III*, 1:465–66, 475.

70. *Ibid.*, 1:473, 479.

71. Berenguela’s promise to have Mayor admitted to Las Huelgas indicates the extent of her control over the royal monastery; she could set terms for its acceptance of nuns not only from the royal family, but also from among her noble clients. For Berenguela’s status at Las Huelgas, see Raizman, 243–44.

72. For the tendency of ecclesiastical writers to overlook women, see Karras, 85–88.

73. Cf. the will of García Fernández de Villamayor, below.

74. “E pido merced a mi sennora la reyna que non consienta a ningun omme nin a mios parientes que contraria ninguna fagan ha estos cabeçales sobredichos, fasta que todas mis debdas e todas mis mandas sean pagadas, e que ella lo faga sano a tod omme a quien ellos lo uendieren; e, si algunas cosas fincaren, que lo den a aquellos que deuen heredar lo mio”: *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1231–1262)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #337, 120 (Feb. 26, 1243).

75. *Ibid.*, 119–20.

76. AHN, Clero, 231/7 (Nov. 8, 1231). See also Fernando III’s confirmation of a similar transaction between this family and the monastery in 1234: *ibid.*, 231/10 (Apr. 4, 1234).

77. *Ibid.*, 285/15 (Dec. 20, 1243).

78. Martínez Sopena, 142, 196.

79. Of course, “don Ordoño, the alcalde” could also be the nephew mentioned in Mayor’s will. The ages of the parties involved are a matter of conjecture.

80. He last appears as majordomo on October 14, 1231: AHN, Clero, 1572/10. Beginning December 8 of that year, the office is listed as vacant: *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Ruiz Asencio, #1990, 8:15.

81. He first appears as Alfonso VIII’s majordomo on April 11, 1198: *Alfonso VIII*, #664, 3:174–76. The only interruption of his tenure came during Enrique’s reign, when he fell out of favor with Álvaro Núñez de Lara. He had first begun confirming royal diplomas by July 26, 1194, about a month after his father died: AHN, Clero, 979/9.

82. González gives the year of his death as 1236: *Alfonso VIII*, 1:360.

83. He first appears in that position on September 30, 1238: AHN, cód. 998, f. 46r. Gonzalo Rodríguez Girón had also “inherited” the office a few years after the death of his father, Rodrigo Gutiérrez, Alfonso VIII’s longtime majordomo.

84. *Fernando III*, #646, 2:181 (March 1239).

85. “el Açor garçero y el azor omadero y el torçuelo mando que los den a la Reyna donna berenguela”: AC Burgos, vol. 51, f. 413 (Oct. 20, 1240). Serrano expresses concern that the will is a forgery, but he generally works on the assumption of its authenticity: Serrano, 30 n.2. The will notwithstanding, García Fernández went on living until at least early March of 1241; he died probably in 1242, and certainly by March 1243: AHN, OO.MM., 568/16 (Mar. 6, 1241); Serrano, 29; see Serrano, #17, 93–4 (Mar. 27, 1243).

86. AHN, Sellos, 56/1 (Jan. 1, 1231).

87. Linehan, “Don Juan de Soria,” 380.

88. *Fernando III*, #299, 2:345–46 (Jan. 25, 1231); *Tumbo B de la Catedral de Santiago*, ed. González Balasch and Rey Souto, #137, 297 (Sep. 5, 1231).

89. Cf. Linehan, “Don Rodrigo and the Government,” 90. Alfonso IX had won a major victory against the Muslim ruler Ibn Hūd at Mérida in March 1230 (CLRC 56, 100), and was planning another southern campaign just before he died that September: CM 4.98, 337–38.

90. Portugal’s chancery underwent a similar transition at this time; see Linehan, “Don Rodrigo and the Government,” 95 n.33.

91. He first appears in royal documents as the bishop-elect on May 10: *Fernando III*, #330, 2:380–82.

92. Linehan, “Don Juan de Soria,” 381.

93. Linehan sees the duration of Osma’s vacancy (about ten months) and of Juan’s lingering as bishop-elect before his confirmation (about sixteen months) as evidence that someone in the ecclesiastical hierarchy was resisting Juan’s appointment: *ibid.*, 381–82. However, it was not uncommon for sees to remain vacant for ten months or more, or even for elected bishops to wait as long as Juan did for confirmation. Although Castilian royal diplomas do not record episcopal vacancies before 1231, the Leonese bishoprics offer instructive comparisons. Coria was vacant for some ten months beginning in 1198; Ciudad Rodrigo for at least twelve months beginning in 1211; and Salamanca for about nine and a half months beginning in 1227. In Castile, moreover, Tello Téllez de Meneses spent more than four years as bishop-elect of Palencia, from 1208 to 1212; Domingo remained bishop-elect of Ávila for sixteen months, the same duration as Juan, between 1212 and 1214; and Mauricio languished as bishop-elect of Burgos for twenty-one months between 1213 and 1215. These are far from the only examples.

94. *Gregorio IX*, #860, 2:280–81 (Dec. 4, 1237).

95. *Ibid.*, #974, 2:366–67 (Nov. 23, 1238). Linehan’s hypothesis that Archbishop Rodrigo blocked Juan’s appointment to León because of this clause in their compact (“Don Rodrigo and the Government,” 93) seems tenable only if Rodrigo actually wanted Juan to retain the chancellorship.

96. *Gregorio IX*, #1115, 2:485–87 (May 26, 1240). The pope observed that Juan's election had been somewhat irregular from a canonical standpoint—probably the result of royal pressure—but acceded to the crown's wishes anyway. Technically, this appointment should also have cost Juan the chancery; Burgos was not a suffragan of Toledo, being an exempt see that owed its obedience directly to the pope. But the provision of Juan's 1231 agreement with Archbishop Rodrigo was not enforced, a circumstance that would be surprising if Rodrigo and Juan were at odds over possession of the chancery.

97. This alone speaks to the vast scope of her power: cf. Silleras-Fernandez, *Power, Piety, and Patronage*, 119, 133.

98. AC Burgos, vol. 25, f. 351 (Sep. 28, 1246).

99. Cf. Linehan, "Don Rodrigo and the Government," 99; but see also *ibid.*, 90 n.12, 98 n.43.

100. "Sepedicti autem castelli donacio facta est ad instanciam et beneplacitum uenerabilis regine genetricis mee, domine Berengarie, ad quam idem castellum iure dotalicii pertinebat, ut in ecclesia Compostellana eius memoria tam in uita quam in morte perhenniter habeatur": *Fernando III*, #636, 3:169–70 (Nov. 6, 1238).

101. There is no record of a tenant in Aguilar de Pedraio between the dissolution of Berenguela's marriage and her death, making it impossible to clarify who held authority there.

102. AHN, Clero, 967/14 (Sep. 4, 1231); *ibid.*, 967/15 (Mar. 4, 1232; the catalogue date of March 2 is in error); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Ruiz Asencio, #1993, 8:20 (December 1232); *Cartulario de S. María de Carracedo*, ed. Martínez Martínez, #371, 260 (March 1235).

103. AHN, Clero, 967/20 (June 1243); *CD Monasterio de Carrizo*, ed. Casado Lobato, #237, 258 (June 1246).

104. "Ex tenore litterarum uestrarum quas nobis direxistis aperte intelligimus, quod homines de algades et de uilla de sancta marina conquesti fuerant excellencie uestre, quod abbas et conuentus sancti petri de eldoncia non permittunt eos quod uadant ad ualenciam populare, quamuis ipsi parati sint facere ius et forum, quod consueuerunt facere abbati et conuentui sancti petri et suis antecessoribus. Conquesti etiam fuerant quod nos scitauimus eos super hoc ut uenirent legionem, et responderent abbati ad forum ecclesiasticum, et quia noluerunt uenire, nos excommunicauimus eos. Ad omnia supradicta taliter respondemus, quod si ipsi facerent uel uellent facere suos foros et dare suas directuras monasterio sancti petri, numquam abbas et conuentus conquesti fuissent domino papae, nec nobis dominus papa causam super huiusmodi delegasset. . . . Ad ultimum nouint excellencia uestra, quod numquam fuerunt prohibiti per abbatem et conuentum sancti petri quod non uadant populare in ualencia uel morari, uel ubicumque uoluerint dummodo faciant suos foros et sua iura monasterio sancti petri. Vnde rogamus excellenciam uestram ut mandatum apostolicum per uos non impediatur": AHN, Clero, 967/22 (undated).

105. *Ibid.*, 966/3 (Dec. 31, 1197).

106. *Alfonso IX*, 1:262. He also assumed that it was the king and not the pope to whom Eslonza had appealed, and who commissioned the clerics of San Isidoro to investigate. The charter, however, is clear on this point.

107. *Fernando III*, #176, 2:316.

108. She had held Valderas since the Treaty of Cabreros and Villalpando since the Treaty of Valladolid: *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:365–74 (Mar. 26, 1206); *ibid.*, #845, 3:479–84 (Jun. 27, 1209).

109. “Berengaria, Dei gratia regina Castelle et Toleti, conciliis de Valencia et de Valderas, de Villalpando, de Castrouerde et de Villafruchos, salutem et dilectionem. El cabildo de Sancta Maria se me querellaron que les tomades portatgo de las bestias alogadas que lieuan so pan ho so uino de la canóniga ho de los canónigos pora sus casas. E si assí es, tengo que les fazedes tuerto. Ont uos mando firmemiente que de so pan nin de so uino, tanbién de la canóniga como del cabildo . . . non les tomedes portatgo por nenguna razón, nin por bestias alogadas nin por las suias mismas nin por las enprestadas. E si sobre esto alguen les tomare portatgo, cient morabetinos me pechará en coto”: AC León, #1111 (Mar. 24, 1238).

110. The writ regarding *portazgo* is in romance, or proto-Spanish, except for its first line. So is the previously cited writ, regarding the tribute owed by San Isidoro’s vassals. Because the tribute writ refers to Berenguela only as queen of Castile, González suggested that it belonged to the year 1223, when Berenguela and the royal court were in Valladolid at the end of March: *Fernando III*, #176, 2:216; cf. *ibid.*, #177, 2:216–18 (Mar. 27, 1223). But the *portazgo* writ is an identical blend of romance and Latin; it also calls Berenguela queen only of Castile, despite its clear date of 1238; it was also issued at Valladolid; and it is also dated March 24. Moreover, two copies of this writ survive in the cathedral archive of León—one dated March 24, 1238, and one dated simply March 24: AC León, #1111 (Mar. 24, 1238); *ibid.*, #1111–1 (March 24). These similarities indicate that both writs were issued in 1238 in Valladolid, part of a general effort by Berenguela to secure the rights of the canons of León within her Tierra de Campos properties.

111. *Alfonso VIII*, #782, 3:365–74 (Mar. 26, 1206); *Alfonso IX*, #219, 2:303–5 (Sep. 7, 1207).

112. *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Ruiz Asencio, #2045, 8:96 (Jun. 3, 1242).

113. *Ibid.*, #1986, 8:8 (Jun. 10, 1231); *CD Monasterio de Carrizo*, ed. Casado Lobato, #202, 221 (Jun. 28, 1235); AHN, OO.MM., 389/191 (March 1236); *ibid.*, 390/197 (September 1238); *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Ruiz Asencio, #2023, 8:64 (Dec. 4, 1238).

114. Cf. *Patrimonio cultural de S. Isidoro*, ed. Martín López, #241, 271 (Jan. 4, 1238), and *CD Catedral de León*, ed. Ruiz Asencio, #2021, 8:61 (May 1, 1238).

115. *Fernando III*, 1:9.

116. Earenfight, “Absent Kings,” 34–37.

117. “Regina uero Berengaria mater eius in tanto sapiencie culmine ferebatur, ut in regni administratione cuncta sapienter et nobiliter ordinaret. Quapropter secure rex Fernandus faciebat moram in expeditione contra Sarracenos, eo quod regina Berengaria uices eius sapienter in regno Legionis et Castelle supplebat et in tanta securitate et pace utrumque regnum gaudebat, ut paruus uel magnus aliquis non auderet uiolenter res alterius occupare. . . . Mittebat regina Berengaria habundanter filio suo regi Fredenando, dum esset in expeditione, milites, equos, aurum, argentum, cibaria et quecumque erant necessaria exercitibus suis”: CM 100, 339–40.

118. “Stabilita igitur incolis et bellatoribus ciuitate rex Fernandus Toletum ad regnam nobilem est reuersus, que pari uictoria iocundata utpote que consilio et subsidio, licet absens, omnia procurarat, gracias cum lacrimis egit Deo, quod antiqua dignitas, ignauia principum liturata, sui sollercia et studio filii fuit Hispanie restituta”: DRH 9.17, 300.

119. “yo que uos ayude commo la reyna donna Berenguella, mi madre . . . et, si por auentura ganar non la podiessedes, yo non sea tenuto de otra ayuda uos fazer”: *Fernando III*, #710, 3:263 (Apr. 20, 1243).

120. “Estando el rey don Fernando en Valladolid con su madre la noble reyna donna Berenguella et con su muger la reyna donna Johana, folgando et auiendo plazer con esas amas reynas de qui el mucho amado era”: PCG 1053, 2:737b. The date is suggested by Fernando III’s itinerary.

121. “E rogamos a nuestro señor el infante que mande poner en esta carta so sello, porque es el rey en tierra de moros, e a el la tierra de veer”: *Libro de privilegios de la Orden de San Juan de Jerusalén*, ed. Ayala Martínez, #275, 480 (May 31, 1240).

122. She was often in Valladolid while Fernando III was on campaign, probably because of its strategic location. See, e.g., PCG 1053, 2:737b, and AHN, OO.MM., 91/2 (August 1246).

123. See, e.g., PCG 1062, 2:743a–b, and 1066, 2:744b.

124. AC Burgos, vol. 25, f. 351 (Sep. 28, 1246). For another case of a queenly court existing alongside a kingly one, see Estepa Díez, “Curia y Cortes,” 55.

125. “este pleyto sobredicho fiziemos en Toledo, ante la reyna domna Berenguiella e ante el ifant don Alfonso, so fijo”: *Fernando III*, #305, 2:348–49 (Feb. 16, 1231).

126. Cf. Nelson, 54.

127. See Shadis, *Berenguela*, 40–41.

128. *Documentación del Hospital del Rey de Burgos*, ed. Palacín Gálvez and Martínez García, #217, 188 (Aug. 21, 1240).

129. *Fernando III*, #664, 3:205–6 (Jul. 9, 1240); *ibid.*, #665, 3:206–7 (Aug. 29, 1240).

130. DRH 9.18, 300; *Gregorio IX*, #743, 2:188. Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:9.

131. *Fernando III*, 1:114; DRH 9.18, 300–301; cf. *Gregorio IX*, #845, 2:271–72 (Aug. 31, 1237); *Fernando III*, #614, 3:145 (Nov. 20, 1237). See also Hernández, “Casa real de Francia,” 128–29.

132. *Fernando III*, #640, 3:173–75 (Nov. 12, 1238).

133. *Ibid.*, 1:103–6.

134. “tres priuilegios que son seelados con Seyelos de çera del pleyto . . . entre uos et don Alfonso fioo del Rey. . . et el otro fue fecho en el Poçuelo de don Gil ante la Reyna donna Berenguela, et es seelado con el uestro seyelo con el de don Alfonso”: AHN, OO.MM., 459/107 (Mar. 15, 1252).

135. *Fernando III*, #726, 3:285 (Apr. 12, 1245). This diploma survives through its publication in the *Bullarium Ordinis militiae de Alcantara* of 1759; however, this is considered a reliable source, which makes it less likely that the wording is a modern error.

136. “de mandado da Rainha Baremgeira, sua tya”: *Crónica do Rei D. Sancho II*, ed. Silva Tarouca, 212.

137. Fernando III and Alfonso de Molina later came to Sancho II's aid when Pope Innocent IV tried to depose him. See Baquero Moreno, 318–19.

138. “Excellentissime domine karissime sue Berengarie, Dei gratia regine Castelle et Legionis, ac illustrissimo uiro amico suo karissimo F(errando), Dei gratia regi Castelle et Legionis”: *Fernando III*, #533, 3:47 (Sep. 10, 1234).

139. *Ibid.*, 3:47–8.

140. Fortún Pérez de Ciriza suggests that the first treaty was a draft (288).

141. “Ad hec nos rex Nauarre condedimus et promittimus quod, si nos sine prole legitima decedere contingerit, ad dominam reginam Berengariam regnum Nauarre libere et sine diminutione aliqua deuoluatur, nisi alius uel alia plus iuris habuerit in regno Nauarre”: *Fernando III*, #540, 3:55 (Oct. 31, 1234).

142. Berenguela might also have been said to inherit Navarre via her paternal grandmother, Blanche of Navarre: Fortún Pérez de la Ciriza, 289 n.129. But this clause would still have put her in an unusual position for a Navarrese queen; see Gómez Mampaso, 130.

143. *Fernando III*, 1:101; *Gregorio IX*, #846–47, 2:272–73. This marriage would have faced canonical obstacles for reasons of affinity.

144. *Fernando III*, 1:102.

145. *Documentos de Gregorio IX*, ed. Domínguez Sánchez, #594, 479–80 (Oct. 10, 1236).

146. See Chapter 5. This title led Domínguez Sánchez to infer that the letter was addressed to Fernando III's second wife, Juana of Ponthieu: *ibid.*, #595, 480 (Oct. 10, 1236). However, Fernando and Juana were not married until late 1237, and the king's first wife, Beatriz, had died in 1235.

147. “quatenus eundem regem ad id datam tibi a Domino prudentiam moneas attentius et inducas”: *ibid.*, #757–8, 2:198 (Jan. 30, 1237); “quatinus eundem regem, natum tuum, ad hoc affectione materna moneas attentius et inducas”: *ibid.*, #793–94, 2:225–26 (Apr. 1, 1237). See also *ibid.*, #778, 2:212–13 (Feb. 9, 1237). Cf. Linehan, “Don Juan de Soria,” 377, and Duby, 78–79.

148. “Pro multiplici gratia quam ex multa vestre exuberantia bonitatis ego et filius meus a sanctitate uestra tam sepe recepimus, nec petitam multotiens sed oblatam, dignum ducens ad gratiarum saltem actiones assurgere condigne nequeo, dum erga me et meos uestram dignitatem attendo. . . . Sed quia ad presens quod volo non valeo, non propter aliquem cordis defectum aut rerum indigentiam humanarum, sed expectando potius vestre beneplacitum voluntatis pro tot beneficiis grates interim reddeo vestre magnitudini, quantas possum . . . Hoc autem apud benignitatem uestram reticendum non credo quod, quia uobis non scribo frequentius, non ex minori deuotione provenit sed propter uerecundiam, quam contraxit sexus femineus a natura, et reuerentiam que debetur Vicario Ihesu Christi. . . . Nunc autem grates Domino refero, quia oportunitatem habeo per venerabilem ac dilectum W., abbatem Sancti Facundi, uirum prouidum et discretum . . . quedam que litteris commendare nolui”: *Gregorio IX*, #1168, 2:516–17 (Dec. 5, 1240).

149. Ibid., #1167, 2:515 (Dec. 4, 1240).
150. He had married Marie, daughter of the younger Berenguela and Jean of Brienne.
151. AHN, OO.MM., 91/5 (May 11, 1246); see Ruano, 50.
152. *Fernando III*, 1:187.
153. Negotiations had been in train since the year before: Ruano, 42–43.
154. *Fernando III*, 1:187.
155. AHN, OO.MM., 91/3 (1246).
156. *Fernando III*, #741–42, 3:306–8 (Jul. 10, Aug. 28, 1246). A similar ploy might have motivated Infante Alfonso's earlier writ. Ruano notes that it was "ciertamente extraño" for neither the king nor his son to meet with Baldwin. He hypothesizes that Baldwin's shaky status as emperor of Constantinople simply wasn't enough to merit the king's (or infante's) personal attention; hence Baldwin was reduced to meeting with Berenguela: Ruano, 49.
157. AHN, OO.MM., 91/6 (Feb. 11, 1247).
158. Ruano, 51.

CONCLUSIONS

1. "Estando el rey don Fernando en Alcalá . . . llegaronle y nuevas de que a el peso mucho: de la noble reyna donna Beringuella su madre, que era finada. El rey, quando las nuevas oyo, fue muy quexado et muy quebrantado del grant pesar que ouo; mas el fortalecimiento del su corazón le fizo ende sofrir et encobrir su pesar. Et non era marauilla de auer ende grant pesar, ca perdio tal madre, qual nunca rey en su tienpo otra perdio que tan conplida fuese a todos los sus fechos. Esta era espeio de Castiella et de Leon et de toda Espanna, por cuyo conseio et por cuyo seso sse guiauan muchos reynos, et ouo auentaia et grant meioria de quantas otras en el su tiempo reyno ouieron. Llorada fue por Castiella de conçeios et de todas las gentes de todas leas; muy llorada fue de caualleros pobres a quien ella muchos bienes fazia. Esta era toda conplida sierva et amiga de Dios. La nonbradia de sus bienes, et de las buenas obras et de las noblezas desta, fue esparzida por todo el mundo; ca esta fue enxiemplo de toda bondat, a la qual aya Dios merced et piedat, cuya sierua et amiga uerdadera ella era, et la faga heredera con los sus fieles en el su reyno; amen": PCG 1073, 2:748a.

2. *Fernando III*, 1:84, 84 n.79.
3. "Et al rey plogol mucho quando lo oyo, et salio ende lugo, et leuo consigo la reyna su muger, et paso el puerto et lleo a un lugar que dizen el Pozuelo . . . et ouieron sus vistas en vno": PCG 1067, 2:745a.
4. AHN, OO.MM., 459/107 (Mar. 15, 1252); see Chapter 7.
5. "nunca se mas uieron en vno despues estos mucho amados madre et fijo. Et moraron y seys selmanas, tomando en vno grandes placeres; desi partieronse alli para sienpre, ca nin ella mas vio su fijo, nin el su madre, nin passo el mas el puerto para

Castiella. Et la reyna donna Beringuella tornose para Toledo, et el noble rey don Fernando con su muger para la frontera”: PCG 1067, 2:745a.

6. AC Burgos, vol. 25, f. 351 (Sep. 28, 1246); see also AC Burgos, vol. 46, f. 430 (Sep. 30, 1246).

7. Her sisters Constanza, abbess of Las Huelgas, and Leonor, former queen of Aragón, had died in 1243 and 1244 respectively.

8. Serrano, 29.

9. *Fernando III*, 1:203.

10. Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada died on a journey to France in 1247, possibly by drowning. Rodrigo Rodríguez Girón died sometime after 1248, and Lucas of Tuy in 1249.

11. “et asmo en su coraçon quel era muy fuerte tienpo para se venir para Castiella, ca sabie que fallarie en ella muchas malfetrias et muchas querellas; et quel conuernia, ssi alla fuese, de se detener et tardar y mas quel non seria mester para lo endereçar; ca ya la ayuda de su madre, que lo escusaua desto et de otras cosas muchas por o quier que ella andaua, perduda la auia; et que sy alla fuese et la frontera asy dexase o tenie ya los moros quebrantados et apremiados, que entre tanto que . . . tomarien tal esfuerço que por uentura quel serie muy graue despues de los tornar a aquel estado en que los esa ora tenie. Et asy entendiendo quel era meior la fincada que la yda de Castiella . . . estando el rey don Fernando en Cordoua mesurando todo esto, ssalio ende et fuese para Jahan”: PCG 1074, 2:748b.

12. All of whom were buried at Las Huelgas. For a discussion of Berenguela’s tomb, see Shadis, *Berenguela*, 163–64.

13. *DM Las Huelgas de Burgos (1231–1262)*, ed. Lizoain Garrido, #439, 233 (Sep. 17, 1253); *ibid.*, #480, 298–99 (Feb. 24, 1255); AHN, Clero, 1024/8 bis (Feb. 2, 1256).

14. This is unusual praise for medieval women; see Earenfight, *King’s Other Body*, 14.

15. This is more common than one might expect; the previously cited examples of tenth-century Leonese queens and of Sancho III of Castile are cases in point. But even Alfonso IX, early in his reign, co-issued certain diplomas with his mother. See, e.g., AHN, OO.MM., 111/2 (May 4, 1188).

16. Bisson, *Crisis*, 429, 494.

17. *Ibid.*, 579–80. Cf. the idea that these assemblies represented a “public opinion” that determined royal successions: Sánchez-Albornoz, 1142–43. The CLRC mentions that the delegates at Valladolid in 1217 aired a variety of opinions before reaching an agreement, but (as noted in Chapter 4) the very fact that they had met in Valladolid shows that they were prepared to endorse Berenguela and/or Fernando III rather than any other candidate.

18. See Rodríguez López, “Sucesión,” 9.

19. See Rodrigues, *Torres Vedras*, and Santos Silva, “Estruturas.”

20. Fernando de Pulgar, *Crónica de los reyes católicos*, ed. Mata Carriazo, c. 22, 71.

21. See Earenfight, *King’s Other Body*. Women also had a prominent place in Portugal’s plural monarchy, at least in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

22. See, e.g., Jordan, “Exploring the Limits”; Nicholas, “Women as Rulers.”

23. Duby, 73–76.

24. See Chapter 7.

25. See Weissberger, xiv–xv, xxi.

26. See Bennett, 59.

27. “Hec enim regina nobilis tanto studio conseruauit et adeo dilatauit recepta carismata graciaram, ut omnis etas, omnis sexus, omnis conditio, omnis professio, omnis natio, omnis lingua affectum senciāt cum effectu, et uirtutum fasciculo non partito omnibus misericordie opera compartitur, et paternorum operum prouida exequitrix, plus inuenitur regni et rerum prodiga quam uirtutum; quam merito nostra tempora admirantur, cui numquam similem nec moderna nec patrum nostrorum tempora habuerunt. Pro qua Dominum exoremus ut eam dignetur diucius conseruare et sibi profutura concedat et bonis operibus habundare, donec felicem spiritum suo restituat Redemptori”: DRH 9.17, 300.

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